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CHURCH PEACE MISSION - DOCUMENTS ON THE CONTEMPORARY GERMAN CHURCH STRUGGLE

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Introductory notes

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## Introductory Notes

- I. The present introduction is just that: an introduction to a collection of theologically interesting source materials springing from contemporary European protestant discussion of nuclear armament. No attempt has been made to spare the reader the effort and the discoveries of working through the materials and projecting himself into the earnestness of the debates they reflect.

The German materials which make up the major part of the collection focus on ten months of recent church history. The two poles of this period are the Request submitted by the church Bruderschaften to the national Synod in the spring of 1958, condemning nuclear warfare or its preparation as sin, and an October meeting of the Bruderschaften at which the theological significance of the summer's excitement was weighed. The position of the Bruderschaften would have commanded a majority of votes at the Synod if there had been a showdown; but this was avoided. The executive leadership of the EKid remains opposed to the Bruderschaften and has decided, perhaps largely for this reason, that there shall be no Synod in 1959.

- II. The special theological interest of these materials lies in the fact that, thanks both to the Germans' typical thoroughness and to their greater homogeneity of theological background, basic theological issues are brought into clearer focus than often can be obtained on the anglo-saxon scene. One need not personally be at home in the Lutheran context in which these issues are expressed to be aware that they appear there with particular sharpness.

- A. The traditional Lutheran doctrine of the "Two Kingdoms" leads itself especially well to the statement of the claim that the realm of politics has rules of its own. This can be interpreted to mean: 1) negatively, that norms of love drawn from Christ's teachings or example are not determining in the realm of the State, and 2) positively, that certain other norms are. To know and apply these other norms is the particular "vocation" of the political and the military expert, who bear for our day the responsibilities borne in Luther's day by the Prince.

This way of formulating the issue is helpful because the fact that other than specifically Christian norms are being appealed to in the argument about war has generally not been faced headon by the theological advocates of preparedness in America. Phrases like "love transmuted into justice", "responsibility", "solidarity in the human community" and the like tend to give the impression that a bridge is being built from Christian love to the hard necessities of war; this the Germans sometimes still attempt, but the "Two-Kingdom" doctrine keeps it from working well.

- B. The adversaries of nuclear armament have attempted first of all to find a new way to bridge the gap between the two Kingdoms. Lutheran tradition did not after all think of the State as completely autonomous; it is free only within the limits of "what may be done without sin" (Augsburg Confession). A State which commands sin has no right to be obeyed. But what is sin? Here we find one possible bridge across the gap. If war - or at least nuclear war - is sin, not just involved in general human sinfulness but absolutely, unqualifiedly sin, an act to be refused at all costs, then it may not be commanded or committed even by the state in the legitimate exercise of its God-given powers.



- C. The door was left open for this argument by Lutheran tradition; but Lutherans had seldom entered the door before. What does it mean, in the face of the fact that all men are sinners and the further fact that the Christian remains a sinner, to fix upon certain acts as being unqualifiedly sinful? In the debate at this point we gain an insight both into the relative unfruitfulness of attempting to orient one's ethics around the avoidance of sin rather than around positive obedience, and into the moral passion of the Bruderschaften which drives them to express themselves so categorically through such an inadequate set of concepts.
- D. The other main line of attack is that which accepts the claim that the State has its own standards, definable apart from the norms of Christian personal ethics. War may have been admissible earlier: now in any case it can no longer be accepted even for the State which may legitimately use violence, because it has become uncontrollable, a means no longer able to serve reliably any definable end. This argument permits the rejection of contemporary militarism without necessitating a sweeping condemnation of all earlier Christian advocacy of war or a solid espousal of pacifism, which especially in German is associated with one particular political strategy of low theological repute. The interlocutors respond that to be consistent the Bruderschaften must confess themselves pacifist - something few of them are ready to do. When thus challenged they answer in one or more of the following ways:
- 1) Though logically the new weapons may stand on a continuum with the earlier tools of war, there is a threshold beyond which a quantitative difference becomes a qualitative one. Nuclear weapons are in any case beyond this threshold, even if it should be difficult to define the threshold itself.
  - 2) This is no time to debate the fine points of theory; agree with us now that this one awful sin must be stopped, and then we can talk about what more we must say to be consistent; the most burning issue must be spoken to first.
  - 3) The criteria of a justifiable war are clear; some wars might meet the requirements; nuclear war never can.
- E. The supporters of Adenauer have, at least at first sight, the weight of Lutheran tradition on their side. Yet the combined effect of the two thrusts of the Bruderschaften argument - proceeding on the one hand from the "what may be done without sin" and on the other from the closer definition of the State's own standards - is to pose the advocates of armament one question for which they have as yet found no answer: where is then the limit, if there is one somewhere, beyond which the State may not go, if the limit is not overstepped when the State prepares for atomic war? Is the State not being made completely autonomous after all, contrary to Luther?
- F. The Bruderschaften feel themselves to be in the line of the "Confessing Church" of Hitler's time. In this they are justified by the presence of much of the same leadership (Barth, Niemöller, many younger leaders) and by some similarity of theological issues. There are however at the same time a number of significant men who had shared in the struggle of the



Confessing Church and who now find themselves on the other side of the battle (Asmussen, Thielecke, some of the bishops), for whom nothing is more offensive than the suggestion that the present opposition to Adenauer's Christian, democratic, constitutional, western-oriented, internationalistic rearmament program is at all comparable with the life-and-death struggle against Hitler.

- G. The term status confessionis has been drawn from classical theology to describe the position in which the "Confessing Church" found itself placed under Hitler. The situation demanded of her a costly confession of the sole Lordship of Jesus Christ; before this challenge everyone had to choose whether he belonged to the True Church or not. The "status of confession" is thus created by the existence of a crucial issue to which only one response is christianly possible. In the eyes of the Bruderschaften this is true of the nuclear weapons issue. To their adversaries it seems that they are attempting to divide the church on an issue which is far from central for the Church's fidelity.

This discussion is highly significant because it gives the debate a degree of seriousness which the same issue no longer has in the more tolerant and more individualistic anglosaxon context. Here "pacifism" is perhaps more respected than in Germany - but it is also less challenging. It is generally admitted - even in some Historic Peace Church contexts - to be a matter of individual decision, and a Christian pacifist would hardly think any more of asking the whole Church to renounce war as sin. This is not the place to detail possible reasons, historical, psychological, or other, for the phenomenon; we simply note that it is unparalleled - even in Britain and America between the wars - that a whole church should be challenged to take, on such an issue, a stand which does not follow from its confessional tradition, and that this challenge should be bolstered with the claim that her answer will decide whether or not (or in how far) she is the Church.

- H. It could only be expected that the announcement of the Bruderschaften that the status confessionis now exists should be even more scandalous to their adversaries than the claim that nuclear war is absolutely sin. Sin is something a Lutheran can discuss without losing his balance; but to make an ethical question a test of fellowship . . . . ! Like the others, this question is made clearer by being handled in Lutheran terms, related to the definition of the Church as existing only under the Preaching of the Word of God. This concept makes it possible to combine an intrasigent insistence that nuclear war is sin and decisive for fellowship with the avoidance of any breach in the visible Church. Yet the Confessing Church had learned that invisible unity is not enough; the status confessionis demands not only individual decisions but also visible unity of the confessors.
- I. The issue of real church-historical significance which has not yet been decided is whether there can be found a middle way here. Will it be possible to refuse to relativize the issue - either through a tolerant individualism of the anglosaxon type or by reviving the claim that the true Church is after all invisible, so nothing may be made a test of fellowship - and at the same time avoid both schism and the abuse of those who differ? The attempt is at least being made. The Bruderschaften can easily lay claim to the allegiance of a majority of the most able church leaders, at the same time that they are not in executive positions nationally nor in many provinces. At the Synod in May they renounced the temptation to force a



showdown; at Frankfurt in October they refused to soften their basic position. Thus the two borders have been staked out within which further search must go on.

- J. It would be difficult to avoid the impression that recent German church history can all be understood as a series of attempts to undo the constantinian synthesis of Church and society. Whether it be the Confessing Church responding to Hitler, the East Germans under Marxism, or the Bruderschaften under NATO, the goal to which Christians are being driven, sometimes in spite of themselves, is a Church that will be the Church in the face of the World. The awareness of "the end of the Constantinian age" of which many are now speaking could have been profitably given more space in the present collection.
- III. The remainder of the materials in the collection comes from discussion in other contexts.
  - A. The Swiss texts are significant mainly in that they demonstrate how similar problems are dealt with in relation to Switzerland's smallness and traditional neutrality. The minority report of which Karl Barth is one of the signers is of course substantially identical to the position of the German Bruderschaften, but the opposing position is less decisive and the tone of debate less urgent.
  - B. France shares with Switzerland the misfortune of not having been driven to a measure of church renewal by Hitler. Here as well the issues being debated seem less crucial to the parties involved. The French report, closely related to the comparable one of the WCC Study Commission on Christians and the Prevention of War in an Atomic Age, is less fruitful than either the WCC report or the German debates. Its hackneyed discussion of the conscientious objectors' "abstention" as being at once morally "purer" and unacceptable because "irresponsible", and the argument that Christians must be politically involved but the Church must not are a new edition of cliches which have served for a half-century without clarifying any issues.
  - C. A part of Karl Barth's Letter to a Pastor in the DDR is here reproduced with the permission of its publishers, the Evangelischer Verlag of Zollikon. The first section of this text is available in the translation of Mrs. Rose Marie Oswald Barth published in The Christian Century. The questions submitted to Barth cover a different aspect of the German problem from that dealt with in the main body of our material but the orientation from which he speaks to them is obviously the same.
- IV. No effort has been made in the following collection of sources to deal with a number of concerns which for the persons involved are closely bound up to the issues of war and peace. In general the divisions among German protestants on these questions run parallel to those called forth by the armaments issue, so that it may not unfairly be said that there is basically but one controversy, of which the documents reproduced here reproduce only the technically theological aspect. The other controversies which might have been dealt with further are:



- A. Whereas the adversaries of nuclear armament give special attention to developing and maintaining interchurch relations with churches, both Protestant and Eastern Orthodox, from east of the Iron Curtain, the partisans of the present German government are especially friendly to Roman Catholicism; each group accuses the other of letting its ecumenical concern be dictated by political considerations.
- B. The theological supporters of Adenauer generally make no bones about belonging to his "Christian Democratic" party, of which they form a protestant wing. The adversaries of armament are in general also opposed to identifying as "Christian" any political line, but during part of the period under study there was some community of interest with the Socialist party in a "Down with Atom-Death!" campaign which went beyond the bounds of church and party in numerous public manifestations. This community of interests was scandalous to some because of the anti-religious mentality of classical socialism; it seems also to have decreased somewhat since the Berlin crisis has weakened for some socialists the political appeal of a pro-peace policy.
- C. In 1957 the administration of the EKID forced upon the Synod an already-signed contract with the Bonn government defining the terms which were to govern the chaplaincy in the Western army. Vehement protest arose both because of the irregular way in which the move had been made and because of the implicit acceptance of West German rearmament which it involved. In the 1958 Synod this measure was repudiated; the reason was however apparently to be seen not so much in the protests of principle expressed in the West as in the fact that this contract seemed to place the whole German church, including its members in East Germany, in the camp of the West, thus giving the East German protestants an additional handicap in their struggle to maintain an uneasy balance between their faith and their loyal submission to the authorities.
- D. The two positions involve two attitudes toward East Germany; the one would tend to sharpen Protestants' resistance to the government there and to lead them to pro-western sentiments; the other would seek a more clearly neutral position for the Church, retaining her freedom both to approve and to reject what is done in both camps. Likewise, whereas the Bruderschaften would hope for a gradual freeing of the Church from all her ties to the State (and in fact regret that complete disestablishment was not carried through in 1945) their interlocutors are committed to keeping all they can of traditional patterns. Only in the Karl Barth text are these issues spoken to directly.

V.A. Abbreviations and terms left in German:

Bruderschaften - Literally, "ecclesiastical fraternities" or "brotherhoods". An informal network of groups of German Protestant leaders, mostly pastors and teachers, meeting for study and witness; loosely organized on provincial and national levels.

M.M.A. - abbreviation for "Means of Massive Annihilation", the literal translation for the most current German term used to refer to nuclear weapons.

D.D.R. - (East) German Democratic Republic.

C.D.U. - Christian Democratic Union, Adenauer's party.



EKiD - Evangelical Church in Germany - A sort of Federal Union of provincial protestant churches, which maintain their own polity and doctrinal positions.

- B. Unless otherwise indicated, the source of the documents herein reproduced is always Junge Kirche, a monthly periodical edited by Heinz Kloppenburg, with editorial offices in Dortmund.
- C. The choice of these texts from a vastly greater mass of similar material has been guided by the following criteria:
  - 1) rather summary articles (especially those of Wolf, Schweitzer, Georgi) than either original individual contributions or point-by-point debates;
  - 2) rather whole articles than subjectively chosen extracts (with the exception of reports on the Synod);
  - 3) concentration on issues of ethical theory (cf. IV above for mention of questions which were thereby left on the sidelines);
  - 4) minimum of annotation; pointing to theological issues is done in the introduction rather than the notes.
- D. The following translations were prepared rapidly. They should be adequate to permit analysis of the thought but are not linguistically correct and should not be quoted under any circumstances. Should any user of these materials desire to quote from them, the undersigned will be happy to provide the German original or to attempt a more careful translation of the passage in question.

J. H. Yoder

#### Church Peace Mission

#### Documents on the Contemporary German Church Struggle

#### I. Background

#### The Theological Declaration of the Confessional Synod of Barmen (May 1934)

- I. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father but by me. (John 14:6)." "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. I am the door by me if any man enter in he shall be saved (John 10:1,9)."

Jesus Christ, as Holy Scripture testifies to us of Him, is the one Word of God which we are to hear, to trust, and to obey in life and in death.

We reject the false teaching that the Church should be able to or need to recognize as the source of her proclamation other events and powers, figures and truths as God's revelation besides this one Word of God.



- II. "Jesus Christ was made unto us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption (I. Rorinthians 1:30)."

Just as Jesus Christ is God's assurance to us of the forgiveness of all our sins, just as certainly and as seriously is he God's effective claim on all of life; in Him we experience a joyous liberation from the godless bonds of this world for free and grateful service to His creatures.

We reject the false teaching that there are areas in our life in which we belong not to Jesus Christ but to other lords, areas in which we are not in need of justification and sanctification through Him.

- III. "Let us be mature in love and grow up in all things unto him who is the head, Christ, from whom all the body is knit together (Ephesians 4:15,16)."

The Christian Church is a congregation of brethren in which Jesus Christ is present and active as the Lord in Word and Sacrament through the Holy Ghost. In the midst of the world of sin she is to testify, as the Church of pardoned sinners, with her faith as with her obedience, with her message as with her order, that she is solely His property and that she lives and desires to live only from His consolation and His instruction while awaiting His appearing.

We reject the false teaching that the Church may leave the form of her message and of her order to be determined by her whims or the changing philosophical and political opinions of the time.

- IV. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them and the great ones exercise authority. Not so shall it be among you; but whosoever would be great among you shall be your servant (Matthew 20:25,26)."

The various offices in the Church do not signify the lordship of one over others, but the exercise of a ministry commanded and entrusted to the entire Church.

We reject the false teaching that the Church can or may choose or accept other special leaders endued with authority apart from this ministry.

- V. "Fear God, honor the King (I. Peter 2:17)."

Scripture tells us that by Divine disposition the State has the task of assuring justice and peace in the not yet redeemed world in which also the Church exists, according to the measure of human insight and ability under the threat of and by the use of force. In gratitude and reverence toward God the Church recognizes this ordinance as a gift of grace. She reminds men of God's Kingdom, his command and his righteousness and thereby of the new responsibilities of rulers and subjects. She trusts and obeys the power of the Word through which God sustains all things.

We reject the false teaching that the State should or can become, beyond its particular commission, the sole and the total order of human community and thereby fulfill the mission of the Church as well.

We reject the false teaching that the Church should or can, beyond its particular commission, take on the nature, the tasks, or the dignity of the State and thereby herself become an organ of the State.



- VI. "Behold I am with you always even unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:20)."  
 "God's Word is not bound (II Thessalonians 2:9)."

The mission of the Church and the basis of her freedom consists in her proclaiming to all nations by preaching and sacrament in Christ's stead and thereby in the service of His Word and work the message of the free grace of God.

We reject the false teaching that the Church may sovereignly place the Word and the work of the Lord in the service of any autonomously chosen wishes, goals or plans.

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(This text furnished the major doctrinal backbone of the Confessing Church's resistance against Hitler and today again is appealed to by the adversaries of nuclear armament. There is lively debate about whether it should be considered as a "confession" in the sense of a building statement of doctrine.)

Theological Declaration of the Extraordinary Synod of the EKID, June 26, 1956

The Gospel forbids us to make idolatry of science, to sacrifice Man to its progress and to misuse it for the production of M.M.A., which no conceivable goal can justify using.

Declaration Published April 27, 1957, by the Deans of the Six Protestant Theological Faculties in the German Democratic Republic

We are one with the Synod of the Ekid and the Ecumenical Church in the radical rejection of M.M.A. They mean the misuse of God's gifts, both human understanding and the forces of nature. They mean the betrayal of Man who is God's image and for whom Christ dies and rose. They mean a blasphemy of the goodness of the creator.

We warn against involvement in their use as well as against irresponsible indifference or resignation. The menace to the world, which threatens not only the present generation but our children and grandchildren as well demands the efforts of every individual in order to obtain the universal outlawing and elimination of M.M.A.

(Declarations similar to the Deans' statement were published in May, 1957 by the executive offices of the provincial churches of Rheinland, Westphalia, Berlin-Brandenburg, Hesse-Nassau, and Bremen, and the bishop of the East German protestant churches.)

II. Before the Synod

Request to the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKID)  
 (Early March 1958)

(The "Request" to the Synod including the "Ten Theses" and writings looking forward to the Synod's meeting.)



- I. How should we Christians stand toward the testing, manufacture, stocking, and use of atomic weapons, as well as toward their being accepted as an element of political strategy?

Previous discussion of this question has been handicapped not only by emotional attitudes and tactical considerations, but also and especially by two other factors:

Either the discussion began speculatively with traditionally accepted doctrine of the nature of the State and moved from there to the significance and justification of the use of violence and of war (within the framework, for example, of a Theology of Orders);

or it began, in a theological legitimate way, with the responsibility of the State, which "in the not yet redeemed world, in which also the Church stands" has "to provide for Right and Peace, according to the measure of human insight and capacity, with the menace and the use of force" (Thesis 5 of The Barmen Declaration); but failed to see that not every use of force and every participation in warfare is thereby justified without qualification; it should rather follow that that such use and participation are conditioned and limited by the political responsibility to maintain right and peace. This line of thought failed to accompany the technological advance in the development of weapons at every step with the question, whether such advance did not so deeply modify the nature of war as a last and always problematic means of political adjustment, that right and peace can no longer in any case be served by it.

Both lines of thought, in their weighing the justification of a war "in itself", circle around realities and possibilities of the past, and thus avoid answering in obedience the question before which atomic armament places us today:

Is it permissible for us as Christians to entrust our and our neighbors' earthly protection to the testing, manufacture, stocking and . . . as a last resort . . . the use of atomic weapons; is it permissible to plan for their use as instruments of politics? "Here an unreserved No is demanded, for what has . . . with these new annihilation weapons if not in truth already before . . . become definitively so inhumane that participation therein cannot possibly be reconciled with the Will of God." (Gollwitzer)

1. The new weapons allow . . . by their very nature, not only their abuse . . . for no more distinction between combatants and noncombatants. They strike indiscriminately every life in the enemy people. It is no longer possible to speak of war as a means of maintaining justice.
2. The new weapons aim at the annihilation of the opponent and permit no other war aims than the demand for unconditional surrender. The intent of their use must be the complete removal of the enemy from combat; they are usable as a deterrent, and as combat weapons only if we are ready to rob millions of men in the other camp of their lives, and on-coming generations of their health, for the defense of our own rights and our own freedom. One can no longer speak of living together in peace as the aim of war.



3. The new weapons render illusory the concept of a defensive war, to be allowed only in an extreme case of national self-defense. "The means of massive annihilation will betray every time what one wants to save, especially if it be freedom and peace." (Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Union). He who adjusts to the thought of atomic war, must be ready to accept in the bargain the destruction also of his own people. To cover this readiness with the slogan, "better dead than a slave", is pagan. The Christian reveres the gift and the trust of earthly life and will not throw it away.
4. The new weapons, in contrast to all which went before, strike those who have nothing at all to do with a conflict as well as coming generations of all living beings, and that not only when used in combat, but already in their testing.

The Evangelical Church confesses that in Jesus Christ she finds "joyous liberation from the Godless bonds of the world unto free, thankful service to His creatures." (Barmen Thesis 2) This forbids her not only any approval of or collaboration in an atomic war and its preparation, but also her tacitly letting it happen. The awareness of this demand, that in the obedience of faith . . . just as anywhere else. . . we ourselves must take the first step to hold back the threatening destruction and to trust more in the reality of the Word of God than in the "realism" of political calculation. The first step is we act of diakonia which we, as Christians, owe the menaced and anxious world of today. Let the faithless hesitate . . . we as Christians may and must dare it in trust in God, who created this World and every living creature in East and West for the sake of the suffering and victorious Jesus Christ and will preserve it through Christ and the preaching of His Gospel until His Day.

- II. If the Synod finds itself unable to assent to this confession, we must ask how the Synod can refute it on the grounds of Scripture, the Confessions, and reason.

For the sake of the men and women for whom we are responsible and for our own sakes, we must insist upon receiving an answer to this question. We owe it to the Synod to remind her of her spiritual responsibility, since it is in the shouldering of this responsibility that she shows herself to be the legitimate authority in the Church. It is our conviction that in the face of this issue the Church finds herself in the status confessionis.

If the Synod agrees with us, that an unreserved No is demanded of Christians facing the problem of the new weapons, must she not also say promptly and clearly to the State, that the true proclamation of the Gospel, even in the Chaplaincy, includes the testimony that the Christian may not and cannot participate in the design, testing, manufacture, stocking and use of atomic weapons, not in training with these weapons?

- III. We, therefore, ask the Synod whether she can affirm together with us the following propositions, for the instruction of consciences concerning Christian behavior with regard to atomic weapons:
  1. War is the ultimate means, always, in every form, a questionable means of resolving political tensions between nations.



2. For various reasons, good and less good, churches in all lands and all ages have hitherto not considered the preparation and the application of this ultimate means to be impossible.
3. The prospect of a future war to be waged with the use of modern means of annihilation has created a new situation, in the face of which the Church cannot remain neutral.
4. War, in the form of atomic war, means the mutual annihilation of the participating peoples as well as of countless human beings of other peoples, which are not involved in the combat between the two adversaries.
5. War, in the form of atomic war, is therefore seen to be an instrument incapable of being used for the resolution of political conflicts, because it destroys every presupposition of political resolution.
6. Therefore, the Church and the individual Christian can say nothing but an a priori No to a war with atomic weapons.
7. Already preparation for such a war is under all circumstances sin against God and the neighbor, for which no Church and no Christian can accept the responsibility.
8. We therefore demand in the Name of the Gospel that an immediate end be made to preparations for such a war within our land and nation regardless of all other considerations.
9. We challenge all those who seriously want to be Christians to renounce, without reserve and under all circumstances, any participation in preparations for atomic war.
10. In the face of this question, the opposing point of view or neutrality cannot be advocated Christianly. Both mean the denial of all three articles of the Christian faith.

J.K. 10 March '58

Dr. Hendrik Berkhof (Driebergen, Netherlands)

"... But now a number of questions arise which we must not attempt to avoid. I raise them here with my answers:

1. Why say no to atomic weapons and not to gunpowder?  
The line is difficult to draw, as is the case everywhere. The use of force is justified as long as the Good which can be honorably attained thereby is greater than the harm which is caused. Wherever this justification might be appropriate. . . , it is not relevant to atomic weapons.
2. Then must Holland withdraw from NATO?  
If the politicians of NATO remain in the arms race and make room for a secession only if the Russians were to change radically, without taking any creative initiatives and risks, we can no longer stand behind NATO.



3. In stopping the armaments race are we not ethically responsible for the results (loss of international equilibrium, leaving one's allies in the lurch, American occupation, inviting Russian aggression)? There are times when we must listen to the command and be blind to the results. Our contemporary politicians should, since they take another position, explain to us that they have seen and evaluated ethically the results of these present competitive policy.
4. Would not Russian occupation be the worst possible fate? No, dropping a hydrogen bomb over Moscow is far worse. Granted, Russian occupation would be bad (it would be like the German occupation, without the consolation of the B.B.C.), but then God's promises concerning the life of His Church may also be fulfilled. Compare Augustine's attitude (in Civitas Dei) toward the barbarians who were taking over the Roman Empire.
5. Must we not maintain our solidarity with our politicians, especially with those for whom God's promises mean nothing? Indeed, we must stand by them in a priestly way but this is only possible if we also stand up to them prophetically. They say that we are bound hand and foot to NATO. We must challenge them to a more independent role in NATO and to a continuous warning of the allies not only to seize upon every chance for negotiation which the adversary offers sincerely or insincerely but also to take risks upon themselves and to take the initiative in stopping atomic testing, etc., without waiting for the other party.

J.K. 10 March '58

Sixty Theses: The Church of Jesus Christ and the Atomic Menace, Professor Doctor Heinrich Vogel, Dean of the Protestant Theological Faculty in Berlin

1. It is sin even to contemplate making of Man, whom God loves, as the Gospel of Jesus Christ says he does, the target of M.M.A.\*
2. In the M.M.A. we have no longer to do with weapons, which can be used with a definite target, against a recognizable enemy, for the prevention of evil, but rather with weapons of violence which would destroy masses of human and other living beings without discrimination.
3. The M.M.A. are not only a suicidal boomerang, but instruments of mass murder and thereby of sin.
4. Such weapons are an abuse of human reason and the forces of nature, which are gifts of God.
5. M.M.A. mean the betrayal of Man, whom God created in his Image, and for whom Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead.
6. The M.M.A. mean a blasphemy of the goodness of God, the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer.

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\* The abbreviation M.M.A. shall be used for the translation "means of mass annihilation", which renders the German term used by Vogel to refer to nuclear weapons.



7. No conceivable purpose could justify the production, testing, and use of M.M.A.
8. Saving the world of the East and of those values which in the East are referred to as the "triumphs of the Socialist Revolution", cannot justify the use of M.M.A.
9. Saving the western world and that which in the West is referred to as "the culture of the Christian Occident", cannot justify the use of M.M.A.
10. It is a wanton distortion to claim, that in saying No to something which is recognized to be sin, as that is the case for M.M.A., the Gospel is replaced by legalism.
11. The slogan "better dead than a slave," should be replaced by: better dead than a mass murderer."
12. Should it then be asked, whether "better a slave than a mass murderer," is a valid slogan, the answer should be affirmative, for nothing should be feared more than sin, and he shall truly be free, whose fears sin more than slavery,
13. The very act of dropping a hydrogen bomb is in itself -- in actu eo ipso -- an act of nihilism, which denies and betrays everything which one claims to defend and to save, be it freedom and human dignity, peace and justice.
14. The M.M.A. are vehicles of nihilism, in that they by their very nature strike indiscriminately the guilty and the innocent, the agents of evil and their victims, the combatants and the defenceless, the living and those yet unborn.
15. The use of M.M.A. create a nihilistic chaos, which opens immeasurable opportunities to the forces of sin.
16. The M.M.A. are vehicles of the demonic, because they by their very nature can serve only inhumane ends.
17. The mass murder which is the intention of the M.M.A. is not only a destruction of the physical life of those who are struck by such weapons, but at the same time murder of the souls of those who let themselves be enlisted as the agents of this slaughter.
18. If I cannot before God conceive of myself as the man who constructs an atom bomb, who orders or who carries out its use in war, then neither may I conceive of anyone else in this position.
19. Those who think that the massive destruction of physical life can be justified by pointing to the destruction of spiritual life by Bolshevism, which they hope to prevent by the use of M.M.A., are sinning against the truth.
20. The use of means of mass destruction for deterrence, with the intention of hindering that which is evil and making war impossible, springs from the illusion, that sin can be combatted with more sin and the devil with devilry.



21. Mutual deterrence by fear condemns whole peoples to the diabolical circle of anxiety, instead of freeing them therefrom.
22. To conceive of the use of M.M.A. as instruments of prudential love (in the service of order) betrays unconceivable blindness.
23. A Christian Occident which makes of the atom bomb its Savior before the danger of world Bolshevism, condemns itself to judgment.
24. A Socialism which seeks to secure its future by the preparation of M.M.A. betrays its own ideals and will not escape the judgment of the Lord of History, even if it deny Him.
25. The opinion, that the means of mass destruction, once available, will not be used because of their suicidal awfulness, is founded upon the illusion that man is reasonable and good.
26. To threaten with the means of mass destruction is either a bluff (if they are never to be used), or a crime (if they are to be used).
27. The liberation from the vicious circle of anxiety, which is made necessary precisely by the mutual atomic menace, cannot be attained by the perpetuation of the anxiety, but only through a daring affirmation of new confidence.
28. The quantitative differences between small, larger, and the largest atom bombs cannot and may not modify the total rejection, to which Christians are compelled, of any war waged with atomic weapons.
29. The gradual lowering of standards which can be observed in the modern history of war, leading to the abyss of a war to be waged by M.M.A., cannot justify abandoning the last barrier before the abyss by wanton toying with the possibilities of the abyss.
30. The State whose duty is to preserve justice and peace and to serve human life in human community by encouraging the good and preventing evil, destroys itself when it uses the M.M.A.
31. The M.M.A. subject democracy to the dictatorship of those few who decide as to their use at the crucial moment.
32. The M.M.A. cannot be conceived of as service to the neighbor, and can therefore not be justified.
33. The M.M.A. make impossible every humanization of war, in the form of limitation to a definable, responsible war aim, and in mutually agreed forms of respect for human dignity established by international agreement.
34. No Christian can accept sharing the responsibility for atomic armament and the use of M.M.A., by participation, by indifference, or by depreciating its importance.
35. The Church of Jesus Christ owes today's world the testimony that the M.M.A. are sin against God, against Man and against all Creation.



36. The truth of the testimony and the duty of testifying are not dependent upon the results which might follow upon the testimony's being heard.
37. To translate the testimony of the Church into a path which will lead to the required elimination of means of mass destruction, is the task of the responsible politician, with whose authority the Church should not interfere.
38. The Church of Jesus Christ need not be committed by her "No" to M.M.A. to a "No" to the use of atomic power for the good of mankind.
39. Because of her belief that God has given to man the authority to rule over creation, the Church will not distort her warning against the Hybris of man's thinking himself a creator into a rejection of the technical use of the forces of creation.
40. The Church of Jesus Christ must be ready in carrying out her priestly political responsibility for man in the atomic age, to accept that the exclusion of Christians from offices of state and political function be imposed upon her.
41. In a time when the masses, afraid to know the truth and afraid of decision, threaten to become accustomed to an illusionary ostrich - attitude in this age of atomic armament, the Christian Church should be the conscience of the world.
42. Woe to the theologian, who attempts to give a good conscience to statesmen who produce, test, and even use the M.M.A., justifying what cannot be justified.
43. No pastor can say to an atomic soldier: "Do your duty as an atomic soldier."
44. Therefore the chaplaincy for atomic soldiers will concentrate upon the veto of the Word of God.
45. The bare possibility that man could do to man what is involved in the M.M.A. (and other modern technical and biological weapons), is a radical threat to the humanity of Man, even if this possibility never becomes a reality.
46. Already the bare fact that man can use M.M.A. against humanity, is so awful, that man can only leave this possibility in the hands of the God, whose goodness man offended, when he misused the knowledge of atomic power for the fabrication of nuclear weapons.
47. The possibility of the annihilation of all mankind by Man, which can hardly be banned from the thoughts of humanity even if the M.M.A. are not used, can be overcome only in faith in the coming Christ.
48. The threatening of Man by Man, menacing not only his physical and psychic existence, but every meaning to life and value in life, can be escaped only in Christ, whose victory not only over the real but also over the fear of the possible has been already won.
49. The End, which we see in the perspective of a war waged with M.M.A. is not the End toward which He who was crucified for us is guiding History, which He who is risen and who is coming again, will bring to pass and reveal.



50. The end of history which God will bring about, is swallowed up, thanks to the resurrection of the Crucified, in the new Beginning which God makes.
51. The end, beyond which there is no new beginning, at which man stares when faced by the M.M.A. is the most hopeless aspect of human despair.
52. It is part of the majesty of the Judge of History that He can make Man, who has been behaving as if he were the creator and the destroyer of the world which has been created and is maintained by God, to serve as hangman's helper in the fulfillment of God's judgment upon himself.
53. Those who make out of the hidden Lordship of God as the Master of History a justification for the M.M.A., are behaving as if it were their duty to carry out the politics of the hidden God, and thereby usurp God's sovereignty.
54. With M.M.A. man is working toward a collective last judgment, a parody of that last Judgment which God has reserved for Himself as Lord of the world and its history.
55. The illusion of being the creator and the illusion of being the destroyer are two sides of one and the same desperate pride.
56. In the use of M.M.A. the same man who thinks that he is the creator of a new world fools himself into thinking that he may become the destroyer of the world.
57. With M.M.A. man usurps the authority of God the gracious judge.
58. The M.M.A. defy and challenge God's judgment in time and in eternity.
59. It is written, that in the last times a third of humanity shall be swept away, but it is not written that the Church of Jesus Christ should participate actively in that event.
60. The M.M.A. which in their universal import stand over against the world-spanning claim of the preaching of the Gospel, just as does the universal claim of atheism, become in the light of the eschatological message of the Bible apocalyptic signs, which the Church of Christ must not fail to see.

Status Confessionis in the Atomic Question? Extract from an Article by  
Dieter Schellong

What should those who know that they are called to an unconditional rejection of M.M.A. do, if the next Synod of the EKiD does not reach the same decision? The same thing will need to be done afterwards as needed to be done before: each at his own place of activity must stand in the service of the Gospel which liberates, must obey God in his practical rejection of atomic armaments and must give account of his convictions as clearly as possible. Before the atomic question we shall no more come to unity in the EKiD than in other questions. And even if the Synod were to take a position in unity the confusion would remain in the Church: for the Synod has no papal authority to determine the decisions which Christians must make in faith. This is not a shortcoming but rather belongs to the essence of the Evangelical Church as a Church of the Word. We can only be effective by means of the Word of the cross; we can and must continue to speak this Word - - - and



relate it to very concrete things - - - but the effectiveness of the Word lies solely in the hands of the Lord of whom it speaks. That this effectiveness is often less and the members of the Church are therefore less united than we might wish is a burden we must expect to bear. This does not mean resignation but means that as Christians of conflicting opinions we must listen to nothing but the preaching of the Gospel; we must not run away from it but seek to say it more clearly and thus let the Lord work on our faith and our obedience. There is no other possibility.

This is not to minimize the importance of the differences. The fact remains that to use M.M.A. is simply sin, and that this is the case for everyone who has to do with such use. But what did the Apostle Paul do about the sins of the Church in Corinth? He left no doubt about the fact that these were sins which exclude men from the Kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:9, f.). But he built no wall between himself and the sinful (except for the unclean case in 5:7), but tried through the whole epistle to overcome these sins and the gnostic arguments brought forward for their justification, and thanked God expressly for this Church (1:4-9). . . . .

Therefore the atomic question cannot lead to a division in the churches. To accept atomic weapons is surely a serious sin; but to separate oneself from those who commit it is not churchly but sectarian. He who fails to listen to the proclamation (even if he does so behind a theological facade) is already in the process of separating himself from the true Church - - - we hope not permanently. It is also unnecessary to constitute a new Synod which might decide more clearly than the Synod of the EKD. Synods have in any case very little useful spiritual influence in the Evangelical Church nowadays. . . . . This must be accepted - - - in the awareness that it is a great handicap - - - because the administration of the Church is not in the hands of Synods but in those of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. And he rules by means of His Word.

J.K. April 1958

#### THE CHRISTIAN IN AN ATOMIC AGE

(Dr. Carl Friedrich von Weizsacker is one of the eighteen atomic physicists of Göttinger who stirred German public opinion by a strong statement against nuclear arms for Germany, and a member of the World Council of Churches Study Commission on "Christians and the Prevention of War in an Atomic Age". He delivered in London in mid-April 1958 the Burge lecture, published by S.C.M. as "Ethical and Political Problems of the Atomic Age". Not having received a response to our request for permission to reproduce a lengthy section of this text, we here quote only a few snatches from a condensation printed by the British Weekly for April 17, 1958.)

The only answer to the atomic weapon that I know for the Christian is the Sermon on the Mount. And I do not say that lightly, for it has taken me many years to convince myself of that.

If I ask myself whether, after reading the New Testament, I can throw a hydrogen bomb, then I know that the answer is "No". And if I may not throw it, then I cannot make it for another to throw. And if I cannot make it in order that it may be thrown, can I then make it in order that it may be used to threaten?



That answer which is personally valid for myself I only knew after I was compelled to ponder what my attitude would be if the bombs were to be made in my own country. Decisions are as personal as that nowadays.

If, however, you ask me what I consider to be right for the Church, I must first of all answer negatively thus: I cannot believe that the Church can say "Yes" to the use of the H-bomb. If she is not able to say "No" she will have to acknowledge her perplexity either openly or else by complete silence. Yet I believe that members of the Church can do themselves and the whole world a service if upon quite definite presuppositions they openly say "No" . . . If, the argument proceeds, we are in no manner prepared for counter-action we should deliver ourselves, or fellow citizens, our children and our grandchildren to a new slavery. I fully appreciate the strength of this point of view . . . Let me put the counter-question: Would slavery ever have been abolished if men had not dared to say it was wrong? But to say a thing so that it is heard is not done by words alone but by words that correspond to deeds. A silent refusal will change more in the world than a strident proclamation . . . Can I justify the assertion that there must be men who will do that and at the same time refuse to be one of them myself? . . .

The problem would be simple if the Church were, as in the first two hundred years of her existence, a politically insignificant sect. . . But since the time of Constantine she has had a direct part in political responsibility. Can the Church on account of this responsibility say "Yes" to the H-bomb? I do not think she can, for by so doing she would betray a greater trust. Is she therefore to say "No" to the H-bomb? I do not think she can because she is spiritually not qualified; she is not prepared for it. It is unfair to suggest a course of action to an institution not prepared for it. It seems to me right to tell the individual member of the Church that this is no justification for personal inaction. . .

What do I mean when I say that the Church is not capable of saying no? I ask you to believe me that I utter this prompted by no personal feeling. It seems to me that the Church, like the world, is neither practically nor intellectually equal to the historical events of today . . .

Conformity may be an act of love, usually it is a form of sloth. Bad conscience, the result of this sloth in each of us, is kept in abeyance by means of ideology. Ideology, as Marx has taught us, is abstract thinking, speaking, believing in order to act concretely in an opposite direction. If ideology is to fulfill its task it must be the offspring of the highest intellectual level of those who hold it. On that account the Church has an admirable theology and with it partly blinds herself to the reality in the midst of which she exists.

Believing that atomic weapons will effectively protect our peace and our freedom is an ideology, a well thought out ideology containing strong elements of truth. Yet its ideological function is to cripple our wills. In wars of previous centuries man was compelled to look his enemy in the eye. Peace and freedom have never been effectively protected save by personal intervention. The H-bomb, as long as it remains in the arsenal, demands no personal sacrifice from us except financial. And, only to take this example to serve for many, the difference made upon a state's finances is that the money will be lacking to carry out an energetic policy of assistance in the under-developed regions.



Trust in the H-bomb prevents imagination from attempting an approach towards undogmatic possibilities of defending our way of life. How many people in our countries have concretely examined how far political aims can be attained by means of passive resistance? Certainly, in my country, hardly anyone knows the simple facts about Gandhi. It is easy to establish the fact that this mode of combat can only bring about a decisive victory in very special circumstances. Has it ever been used as argument against armies that wars are capable of being lost or of ending indecisively? If it is true that, in the future, wars are unlikely to break out, if even only on account of the H-bomb, then passive resistance will in many cases remain the only possible method of fighting. What it requires, just as does a war with weapons, is a determined and disciplined cadre. Neither this possibility nor the far more conventional political methods that I have discussed have received sufficient examination.

Hence I do not think that the Church is, as an institution, in a position to suggest on a basis of political responsibility the renunciation of the H-bomb; she does not know, none of us knows, what such a suggestion would mean. But she would know as little if she defended the bomb. . . .

### III. The Synod

Extract from the Report of the President of the Council of the EKID,  
Bishop Otto Dibelius, to the Synod of the EKID,

April 26-30, 1958

The Request of the West Germany Bruderschaften first found a serious public response from a Church in the Provincial Synod of Wurttemberg. There the Provincial Bishop formulated a personal protest against two points of these Theses. First of all, against the formulation of Thesis 8. . . . Arming for a possible war in order to prevent war is, he said, by no means the equivalent of "preparation for war". Likewise against Theses 9 and 10 which declare categorically and dictatorially that another standpoint than that of the Bruderschaften or neutrality toward the atomic question is not Christianly possible since both mean the denial of all Three Articles of the Christian Faith. The Provincial Bishop said that here there is political and theological error which could seriously confuse both Church and State.

And now may I address a personal appeal to the Synod - - - not to anticipate the discussion but because as President of the Council I consider myself obligated to help carry out what our constitution calls for. According to Article One the already existing fellowship of German Evangelical Christianity becomes visible in the EKID in that this Church recognizes as her foundation the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The member churches are called to listen to the testimony of their brethren. The task of the Synod is however to serve the preservation and the inner growth of the EKID. . . . One should not speak of the possibility that because of a question which comes to us from the outside Evangelical Churches should deny fellowship to one another and a new "confessing Church."

Of course, every pastor has the right to gather together with persons of like views for whatever purposes he desires - - - as is the case in the Bruderschaften. But one should not speak of a new "Confessing Church." The church history of the last hundred years would have made us more capable of seeing that no divine



blessing can rest upon divisions if they are not demanded by Holy Scripture with coercive clarity. If no other reasons are convincing, at least our responsibility for the brethren in the East should smother such thoughts . . . . .

We intend to listen to the testimony of our brethren as our constitution demands. Our friends in the Bruderschaften may be assured that we feel with them how deeply their consciences are tried. There is no one among us who has not also been bothered by the question we are dealing with . . . . .

Permit me one more personal word. I am very cautious in labeling a particular human act as sinful. I am much too deeply aware that all of our action and thought is hopelessly immeshed in sin. And if it should come even to total war I do not say how a Christian should be able to hold himself out of this involvement.

What is important is that the conscience of men must remain alive, even under the terrific pressure of indispensable military obedience; and at that point where the Christian conscience reaches a limit beyond which it cannot go, this limit must be respected. I do not hesitate to say that if I were 50 years younger and were commanded to handle M.M.A. I would go to my chaplain - - - this is what he would be there for - - - and would say to him, help me get away from this post! I can't do it! . . . . .

There is no longer such a thing as a just war. War with atomic weapons is genocide. It is not really, as it has been called, organized national suicide. For the nations do not vote whether they desire war and thereby desire to commit suicide. This decision is in the hands of a handful of men and must be made in a matter of minutes. We can therefore only say that war with atomic weapons is mass murder of other peoples and of ones own people!

It is vain to hope that nations which possess atomic weapons would not use them if war comes. . . . . And even if no more weapons were being stocked one would find ways and means in the case of a war, which means the breakdown of all legal limitations, to put atomic power in the service of destruction.

Because we reject atomic weapons we must reject war! What just a few decades ago seemed to be senseless utopianism is today an indispensable necessity. And it is the Church whose duty it is to proclaim this command before the world so that no one can fail to hear: there can be no more war!

J.K. May, 1958

"Resolution on the Atomic Question" - Berlin Synod

Passed on April 30, 1958

The Synod of the EKID greets the churches, the east and the west. We thank God that He holds us together in His grace. In this fellowship we work for peace.

In agreement with the decisions formulated by the World Council of Churches in New Haven in the summer of 1957, the Synod rejects warfare with atomic weapons as unreconcilable with the conscience of humanity before God.



She requests of responsible politicians that they do everything which can lead to a general disarmament, not only of atomic weapons but also of the so-called conventional weapons.

She requests the world powers to cease and not to resume the testing of atom bombs.

In our divided fatherland she requests both governments to do everything in their power to maintain freedom of belief and of conscience, to serve the interests of peace and to avoid the atomic arming of German forces.

The divergences which exist in our midst in the evaluation of atomic weapons are deep. They range from the conviction that even the fabrication and stocking of the means of mass destruction of any kind is a sin before God, to the conviction that situations can be conceived of, in which resistance with equivalent weapons can be justified before God in light of the duty of defense.\*

Under the Gospel we remain together and seek to overcome these oppositions. "We pray God to lead us by His Word to common understanding and common decision."

\* Our underlinging (ed.).

J.K. May, 1958

#### After the Synod

(Extracts from a letter expressing an informal reaction to the results of the Synod within Bruderschaften leadership circles)

The Synod agreed with the World Council (New Haven Declaration) in rejecting "total" war waged with M.M.A. as unreconcilable with the conscience of humanity before God. But she was not yet able to draw - - - on the basis of reasons of faith and in the form of binding instruction of consciences - - - from this rejection the consequences for the attitude of the individual Christian to so-called atomic weapons.

She did not find herself able either to accept or to refute the 10 Theses of the Bruderschaften in which Christians are challenged to refuse under all conditions to participate in the preparation of an eventual atomic war, and in which an opposing or a neutral standpoint for the Church was declared to be unacceptable.

By admitting, in the face of contradictory views within the Synod, that she is not yet capable of offering a binding and a theologically based clarification of the problem, she at the same time admitted the pressing necessity of further work at this point and thereby made room for the Bruderschaften to continue to propagate their views.

The Bruderschaften will continue in the conviction that the two contradictory convictions noted by the Synod - - - "collaboration is sin" and "collaboration can be an act of love for neighbor" - - - cannot continue to stand side-by-side. They will request from the advocates of the opposed position their justification on the basis of the Gospel. They will in their preaching reach the conscience of their hearers that confidence in God and the obedience of faith exclude any participation in atomic armaments. They will not cease to challenge men to this concrete confession.

J.K. 10 June '58



On the Synod of the EKID - - Heinz Kloppenburg

What should we say to the results of the Synod?

The decision on the question of atomic armament disappointed countless people who had hoped for a clear and definite Christian testimony from the Synod.

Professor von Weizsäcker had warned us earlier in April not to estimate too highly the possibilities of the institutional church. "She is spiritually not qualified," he felt, because she is not spiritually up to what is asked of her. What is now necessary is, therefore, the humble refusal of the individual, refusing to collaborate and confessing himself publicly to his refusal.

But did the Synod not also fail to do even what it could have done?

What is decisive is this: The Synod confessed its incapability to speak unitedly on this problem. To reiterate a general rejection of atomic armaments is not truly a concrete word to the Christian in the Church, who is asking what he should do today. Still, one should not fail to hear that the request of the Synod that "the atomic arming of German forces be avoided" was stated absolutely, without any conditions, without "when and if" or "in so far". Nor should one fail to hear that Bishop Dibelius said clearly, "Krieg geht nicht mehr!" and further said that he personally would not be able to use an atomic weapon.

Nor should one fail to hear that the contract with the government concerning chaplaincy, which had been forced upon the Synod a year ago in an improper way, is in process of liquidation.

And now for the sentence about the deep divergences; it avoids any whitewashing of the seriousness of the situation. It does not seek an ambiguous formula to bridge over the differences. It does not say what was said two or three years ago on the question of military service and conscientious objectors, namely that both answers are Christianly possible. It faces the fact: there are some who say that neutrality or collaboration is sin (Heinrich Vogel, the Bruderschaften, and others). Others say: this claim of the Bruderschaften and others is impossible, it is or threatens to become heresy.

The Synod faces the fact: both standpoints are represented in the church. It did not build a bridge nor did it excommunicate one group or the other. The representatives of the conviction that collaboration is sin probably formed the majority of the Synod. But they renounced the attempt or the temptation to dominate the minority. On the other hand it is no longer possible to discredit within the church the work of the Bruderschaften.

But the Synod said in its final sentence that the present situation cannot remain. It did play with the thought of division. Divisions in the body of Christ are something terrible because they endanger the believability of the church's witness. But it is no less terrible and no less dangerous for believability when one places unity before truth.

The struggle for a true confession with which we are charged goes on. It is now entering its decisive phase. The Bruderschaften shall challenge men with increased intensity to concrete confessing of their faith. They shall do this, as the Synod requested: "We pray God to lead us by His Word to common understanding and common decision."



But we cannot get around the necessity to decide. All we can do is to ask once more the question of the Bruderschaften: how can one at the same time call himself a Christian and arm himself with atom weapons? For us this means the denial of all three articles of the Christian faith. Must not the entire church confess this with us?

The Synod at Berlin heard this question. It did not reject it as an improper question. Thereby, the question is directed to every member, to every church council, and to every provincial Synod. The Bruderschaften shall not cease to call for a decision.

"We pray God to lead us by His Word to common understanding and common decision."

J.K. May '58

Extract from a Report of the Synod -- Erwin Wilkens

In the Lutheran Church paper the Synod members in the subcommittee on atomic armament had wrestled desperately with one another, as was reported by the committee chairman, Professor Raiser. As was well said, "They were acting out of fear, not of death but of sin." The representatives of the well-known opposing convictions were not able to convince one another; neither was able to move a foot. This is truly an either/or. The discussion raised numerous questions: theological, ethical, political, and even technical military questions, which would have deserved a careful discussion for which the Synod had neither time nor capacity. The Synod did the only thing worthy of a show which considers itself spiritual, i.e. no attempt was made at settling the matter by majority vote. What significance could that have had for a question of this profound seriousness? Nor was there an attempt to find a dubious compromise formulation. Rather the decision which was accepted with four abstentions (if it pleases anyone it can be revealed that there were two abstentions on each "side") which express the common rejection of M.M.A.; the poles of the tension in the conflicting evaluations of atomic weapons were described, and the members assured one another of their intention to remain together under the Gospel.

For the continuing discussion the following considerations should be kept in mind:

- a) For the start we held a division of the EKID on the issue of atomic weapons to be improbable. The EKID is a federation of provincial churches, each of which is bound by its own confession. It makes no decisions of doctrine, formulates no confessions, and therefore pronounces no excommunication. Since the EKID has no individual members, the only question it can deal with is whether the doctrinal and confessional basis on which a member church stands is sufficient for membership in the federation. Since the structure of the EKID includes from the very beginning divergences of doctrine, it is self-evident that divergent views on the question of war are possible within the EKID. Whether church fellowship is to be broken by this question must be decided by the advocates of the status confessionis thesis in their provincial churches and their local congregations, not on the platform of the EKID. It would be good if this would be kept more clearly in mind in the future.
- b) Nonetheless the question of church fellowship and the danger of the division on the atomic issue is a serious problem for the EKID because the difference cuts across all the provincial churches. For this reason the notorious



Extract from a Report of Klaus von Bismarck

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I myself learned something essential in the course of the debate. Previously I had spoken as follows:

- a) I consider the modern M.M.A. (nuclear and conventional) as irreconcilable with the Christian conscience;
- b) I see in pacifism no complete solution because there are situations in which it cannot be justified to leave the defense of one's own realm of responsibility to friends or neighbors;
- c) The growth of armaments in West Germany seems to me to be dangerous politically for both interior and foreign policy. For this reason I would have voted against the atomic armament of the Federal Army for purely political reasons, especially because I think that this would not destroy the possibility of remaining in a conditional partnership with the Western Alliance.

The course of the debate has brought me to the following new convictions:

- a) In an international alliance which is sure to be atomically armed there is no possibility to remain out of things for a personal renunciation of atomic weapons. As clear as I am that old-fashioned pacifism is no total solution, just as clearly I have gained respect for a consistent pacifism which rejects the use of all weapons;
- b) The intermediate solutions which declare the use of atomic weapons to be sin but still permit conventional weapons seem to me still more questionable than before. The Synod has shown me that we laymen must be still more cautious when conclusions are drawn directly from the Bible for the realm of politics, as theologians tend to do;
- c.) Emigration, the attempt to flee from involvement in sin by a demonstrative No is no generally valid solution. According to my conviction it seems rather to belong to the responsibility of the Christian to accept the duties of the use of power and thereby to prevent the use of M.M.A.

It was very good that the deep conflicts were not camouflaged but rather came to clear expression in the Synod's Declaration. Of course, there remains a sense of depression, because we have all failed to listen openly enough to the command of God to come to a united decision under the leading of the Holy Ghost. But perhaps it is presumption to expect of every Synod a Pentecost.



But we cannot get around the necessity to decide. All we can do is to ask once more the question of the Bruderschaften: how can one at the same time call himself a Christian and arm himself with atom weapons? For us this means the denial of all three articles of the Christian faith. Must not the entire church confess this with us?

The Synod at Berlin heard this question. It did not reject it as an improper question. Thereby, the question is directed to every member, to every church council, and to every provincial Synod. The Bruderschaften shall not cease to call for a decision.

"We pray God to lead us by His Word to common understanding and common decision."

J.K. May '58

Extract from a Report of the Synod -- Erwin Wilkens

In the Lutheran Church paper the Synod members in the subcommittee on atomic armament had wrestled desperately with one another, as was reported by the committee chairman, Professor Raiser. As was well said, "They were acting out of fear, not of death but of sin." The representatives of the well-known opposing convictions were not able to convince one another; neither was able to move a foot. This is truly an either/or. The discussion raised numerous questions: theological, ethical, political, and even technical military questions, which would have deserved a careful discussion for which the Synod had neither time nor capacity. The Synod did the only thing worthy of a show which considers itself spiritual, i.e. no attempt was made at settling the matter by majority vote. What significance could that have had for a question of this profound seriousness? Nor was there an attempt to find a dubious compromise formulation. Rather the decision which was accepted with four abstentions (if it pleases anyone it can be revealed that there were two abstentions on each "side") which express the common rejection of M.M.A.; the poles of the tension in the conflicting evaluations of atomic weapons were described, and the members assured one another of their intention to remain together under the Gospel.

For the continuing discussion the following considerations should be kept in mind:

- a) For the start we held a division of the EKID on the issue of atomic weapons to be improbable. The EKID is a federation of provincial churches, each of which is bound by its own confession. It makes no decisions of doctrine, formulates no confessions, and therefore pronounces no excommunication. Since the EKID has no individual members, the only question it can deal with is whether the doctrinal and confessional basis on which a member church stands is sufficient for membership in the federation. Since the structure of the EKID includes from the very beginning divergences of doctrine, it is self-evident that divergent views on the question of war are possible within the EKID. Whether church fellowship is to be broken by this question must be decided by the advocates of the status confessionis thesis in their provincial churches and their local congregations, not on the platform of the EKID. It would be good if this would be kept more clearly in mind in the future.
- b) Nonetheless the question of church fellowship and the danger of the division on the atomic issue is a serious problem for the EKID because the difference cuts across all the provincial churches. For this reason the notorious



"thesis of condemnation" of the Bruderschaften /Thesis 10 of the Request to the Synod/ did play a significant role at the Synod. No one in the Synod made this Thesis his own or stood for it without qualification----this should be said clearly as protection against the formulation of legends. Those who did not back away from it . . . . . at least qualified it practically and declared that it was merely the posing of a question. The Synod decision on the atomic question can only be understood as a rejection of this thesis of condemnation. One cannot remain together "under the Gospel" with people who deny all Three Articles of the Christian Faith . . . . . Where Thesis 10 of the Bruderschaften is held upright church fellowship ends, even for the EKID. There must be no doubt about this. He who thus shifts the center of the Gospel is sectarian ---- we reiterate this reproach formally.

- c) It is indeed understandable that the Bruderschaften find it difficult to separate themselves from their Thesis 10. When one makes an ethical decision which is based upon a spiritual-prophetic awareness into a question of faith, then one must question the faith of those who act otherwise. If one does not do this and holds an opposing decision to be also Christianly possible, he has already betrayed his ethical monism. He has conceded that the final decision on a political issue is made in the confluence of the moral conscience and political reason. But this is what the adversaries of the Bruderschaften are arguing.
- d) The way in which the Bruderschaften are held the captives of their prior decision of principle shows itself in their stubborn insistence on a quantitative conception of sin. From the viewpoint of a Biblical and protestant understanding of sin it would seem to us to be impossible to isolate arbitrarily atomic weapons from the general involvement of this world in sin and to declare them to be sin in an absolute sense, which must be negated by a radical "strike," while conventional weapons belong to another ethical category. He who wishes to avoid the sin of violence by unconditional nonparticipation must commit himself to a consistent pacifism. It is significant that the theological representatives of the Bruderschaften still whose inhibitions with regard to this consequence of their position. It should further be examined what this conception of sin means for the Doctrine of Justification. The old protestant thesis that the Doctrine of Sin and the Doctrine of Justification are correlates also applies here.

Hearing how unavoidable the pacifist conclusion is can be seen in the make-up of customary defense organizations. No soldier of the two power blocks of the world stands before a decision between atomic and conventional weapons. He belongs to international alliances and participates already in their atomic strategy. In any moment he can fall into the position of the one who is struck by these weapons---- that is, he may find himself in the position of defense. But whether the Federal Army or the /East German/ National People's Army receive atomic weapons or not creates no basically new ethical situation. Martin Niemoller seemed to see this consequence of this position when he wondered whether a Christian today can be a statesman at all, since the Scriptures themselves do not command it.

J.K. 10 June '58



Extract from an article by Dr. Brigitte Grill

. . . . . In the plenary session these conflicts became fully open. Professor Vogel affirmed that this Synod is challenged by a question such had seldom faced a Synod. The question is asked not by men but by God. This is its frightening depth dimension. In the proposed draft of a statement there is by far no explanation of what should be said after listening to the views of Scripture. The decisions of the Synod should not be based on grounds of moral or political reasoning, but solely under the question: What is sin? The atomic weapons blaspheme the goodness of God. It is sin to make Man, who was loved by God and Jesus Christ, the target of M.M.A., even hypothetically. This sin weighs heavier than the salvation of the so-called Christian Occident or of the achievements of the October Revolution.

Therefore, the Christian can only say: "Hands off!" The responsibility of the Church is to break through the vicious circle of anxiety of which mutual threats are a sign. Even to play with the possibility of the atom bomb already is a pact with nihilism. Such pact gives expression to a deep loss of hope and of significance in life, in which one no longer knows that Christ is the Lord over all principalities and powers.

Professor Vogel challenged the advocates of the atomic armament to refute him and his friends on the basis of Scripture. As long as this has not happened their question demands action from the Synod.

In the course of the following discussions several efforts toward such a refutation were made. The psychological-political argument brought forward by Dr. Eberhard Müller, that we should not drop our M.M.A. as long as others have them, because a unilateral disarmament would be a temptation for the others, had no convincing theological weight even for the advocates of atomic armament. . . . .

Likewise in the case of other efforts toward refutation the hearer could hardly avoid the impression that he was observing theological gymnastics with which political decisions were to be justified theologically after having been made for political reasons. The attempt of a few participants to consider atomic weapons as being the service to the neighbor commanded by the Gospel sounded completely grotesque. The same was true for the claim that to renounce atomic armaments could also be a sin because caring for one's wife and child is also a form of love for the neighbor which is commanded by the Gospel, and justifies a last resort to nuclear weapons. In this context the thesis was stated: What is sin is decided by a heart from which it comes. Here it seems clear that a dangerous confusion and relativizing of values is taking place, which misses the real problem. For the reality of sin it makes no difference whether the sinner, humanly speaking, has good or bad intentions.

In conclusion it can be stated that the advocates of atomic armament in West Germany gave no answer to the question which stood behind the discussion and which one of the participants stated as follows: "How can such a conception be considered Christian? Look at our Lord and His ministry and then dare to say: 'And in the Name of this Lord I take up these weapons!'"



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J.K. 10 June '58



## The Constantinian Heritage

Karl Kupisch

In the course of the recent Synod there is basically only one question which came to the fore: a question which was already involved in previous debates but has just now become visible to every member of the Synod in its unavoidable seriousness for the future of the Church. I mean the awareness, which is no longer hidden to anyone in our day, that the Christian framework of the European world is in the process of disappearing: that in many parts of our continent it is already completely meaningless and has given way to indifference or a conscious or an unconscious antichristian attitude. In so far as we see in this, the gradual modification and dissolution of inherited expressions of faith, it is a process which we have long recognized as a progressive spiritual development and given the not quite adequate label "secularisation". But secularism did not necessarily mean an immediate danger for the Church, since Christian faith is not tied to a fixed world view or form of society. But what we are observing today is more than a normal historical transition: it is an unprecedented decline of all stabilizing forces, a disintegration of human substance on both sides of the iron curtain simultaneously with a revolutionary aggression from one side against everything which was previously fundamental to humanity.....

The Confessing Church, it must be said in the face of all tendencies toward dramatization, was not an imposing fleet but rather a rowboat seriously shaken by the storms which began as soon as it had left the port. To the clever and wise, it was from the very beginning foolishness and a laughing-stock. But in this little boat, whose occupants included many fearful non-swimmers, Church history was written in those years. What took place in the way of resistance - - - in fear and trembling - - - did not permit the Hitler regime to win a full victory over conscience. One of the experiences of these years is that the "Constantinian Age" had run itself into the ground. A Church forced to stand on her own feet, which no longer confuses her message with a politically favored philosophy, will also insist that her relationships to government and her political responsibility be determined solely by the freedom of faith.

After 1945, there was no "seizure of power" by the Confessing Church. The reconstruction . . . . took place on the broadest possible basis with the use of all willing hands. The essential concern was to restore continuity. We should not hold it against those men . . . that they built the new ship of the Church with frequent consideration of older designs, keeping the organization elastic so that as many as possible could contribute and the structure of the mass Church was not endangered . . . many pillars of the Constantinian Age were thus restored. But was it to be possible to sail off into a stormy future with a Church so structured, which considers itself as an organ of conservative leadership? There are in the Church, as well as elsewhere, worn out ideas, worn out methods and also worn out people who cannot grow beyond the problems of yesterday and the day before yesterday and who try in vain to master the present which they do not understand with conceptions of an outworn time.

It was General Superintendent Jacob of Kottbus who in 1956, for the first time, dealt with the theme of the "Constantinian Age" in a solid lecture. He was not speaking only for the situation of his own (Eastern German) Church. But at that time the critical case which could have brought about a practical awareness of the situation of which he spoke was lacking. Already then, there were many voices asking with growing concern if it was right for church leaders and the Synods



which generally tend to follow them to close their eyes to the signs of the time. Especially had it seemed to be the case in last year's Synod, that the attempt was being made in leadership circles to hang on to the sinking "Constantinian Age" by the tip of the mast. Not the agreement on the chaplaincy in itself, but rather the way in which it was brought before the Synod as a fait accompli seemed to many to be such a Constantinian leftover. This same question, namely in how far the awareness that times have changed has led to practical consequences in the Church, especially for her bishops, stood behind this year's atomic debate.

Whoever is capable of thinking evangelically, i.e. with the Word of God in his ears, should not be anxious about the outcome of this dialogue. If the observing outside world could get over its habit of evaluating the activities of the Church on the lines of the East-West division, it would be wholesomely surprised to see what happened at the Synod against all expectations: namely, that men who disagreed did not let themselves be led by a calculated effort to achieve agreement, but rather remained together on the basis of the Gospel, in full awareness of their disagreements, because they wanted to be obedient to God. This fact itself is an unintended triumph over the moribund Constantinian Age, which was a master of compromise. At this Synod it was unequivocally evident that we stand at the divide between two epochs. It will demand the faithfulness of everyone to avoid all passionate self-will. When all human cleverness is insufficient, the Church may be that much more confident in the immediate help of her Lord. At this Synod not men but God had the last word. That should be admitted and one should not speak hastily or with resignation of a victory of the "left wing". That would be evaluating according to the evil methods of political vote-counting which lead a Church into disobedience towards God . . . In the circles of the Bruderschaften there was not for one second a feeling of the victory of "their cause". If one takes into consideration what was said against these groups of "nonconformists" in the way of mockery, hate and libel - - - mostly without a shred of factual basis - - - this only deepens the conviction that the Constantinian Age is truly ripe for the sickle. . . .

The Occident is a reality. It still is today. But it is in danger of losing itself through its potential Godlessness. Rome was lost when her enemies noticed that the Virtus Romana was just a front. The greatest value which the ancient world bequeathed to us was not Homer, was not the Dialogues of Plato, the verse of Vergil or the wisdom of the Stocis. It was those pages of the New Testament whose message called into existence the Church of Jesus Christ. We ourselves could bequeath to our posterity no greater heritage. To conserve this heritage as a reality which truly conditions the lives of mankind in our day is the brand new and challenging task which lies before the door of the Evangelical Church in Germany today.

J.K. June '58

#### IV. The Summer's Debate

##### Declaration of Seven Catholic Moralists in the German Federal Republic

May, 1958

(This declaration was published in an official organ of the Federal Government)

The possibility of arming the German defensive forces with technical atomic weapons has called forth great unrest within our people. With regards to the confusion concerning the utilization of the most powerful forces available in our time the



question is continually raised: "What should we Christians say of atomic armament?" In this situation the word of the Church is of decisive significance. The Christian conscience should guide itself by this word.

The Church has not remained silent concerning the war and peace. Our Holy Father has spoken to this issue from several points of view. His teachings have been taken up by bishops and theologians and applied to the concerns which oppress us. Not everyone who today appeals to the teaching of the Church represents this teaching adequately and without distortion.

When the Church speaks to these questions, She does not do it in the manner of a political party or in the service of a party. To interpret the word of the church one must begin with a proper understanding of her mission to the world. The Church gives more than general principles. She speaks out of her knowledge of the historical way of salvation for humanity and out of her concern for the welfare of men. In this respect she is the leader of humanity on its path through this age. She does not claim to have an immediate illumination from God for the decision to be made in each moment. She does, however, place every situation and every decision called for by the situation under the judgment of the Word of God and the saving will, which is revealed therein once for all. This and only this is politics of faith, politics proceeding from the Christian conscience.

I. It is a politic of peace. It does not dispense action in history from the risks inherent in all action. The command of peace is of the divine order, for God is a God of peace. (Romans 15:33) He created the world to be a place of peace, that "orderly rest" of which St. Augustine speaks. The purpose of this divine imperative of peace is the protection of those values that God has entrusted to humanity. Of course, sin repeatedly brings new unrest and disorder into creation and thereby endangers its peace. Christ's victory over sin in His work of redemption has given to men both the restoration of their peace with God and a renewed possibility of peace among nations. We do not share the opinion of those who believe that wars are inevitable as long as there will be men. We rather consider the attainment of an order of peace among peoples to be a real-political possibility and therefore, a binding obligation.

II. Peace is the fruit of righteousness. Righteousness (justice) is at the same time the foundation of the state. Whenever the power of the state serves righteousness and imposes, defends, or secures justice, it is an instrument of peace. It is, therefore, not up to an arbitrary decision of the powers of state, whether and to what extent they should accumulate power for the defense of justice. This depends rather upon the importance of the values which are threatened, and on the degree to which they are threatened by powers which do not recognize these values or the order of justice; and lastly it depends on the technical availabilities in means of attack and defense.

Everyone responsible for the edifice of State is obliged to take account of these three considerations without prejudice and without wishful thinking. A part of the convictions in our people comes from the fact that the importance of the values which are in danger or the extent to which they are menaced is not sufficiently recognized, at the same time that the immensity of the technical problems causes a paralysis of the awareness and of the will.

III. Undeniably the destruction caused by a modern war is so great that mankind rightly trembles before it. This makes all the more evident the criminal character of an aggressive war. The development of modern weapons has however brought us to a point where many reasons, which in an earlier day, justified the use of weapons can today no longer be considered as valid. The more terrible



the effects of the weapons are, the less can a defensive warfare be justified for reasons of borders, economics, and other national interests or prestige. The more terrible the destruction which menaces, the greater will be the sacrifices, going even to the point of abandoning unimpeachable rights, for which whole peoples must be ready, for the sake of peace.

IV. Nevertheless, defense remains permissible when the moral or physical existence of peoples is threatened or menaced by an attack. In this case defense may in fact be a duty. For the sake of this defense, citizens may and must be called to great material and personal sacrifices. When we have to do with the violent propagation of a view of life and a way of living, which denies all "ideological co-existence", which combats to the limit all opposing ways of believing and living, seeking to annihilate them step-by-step, driven by a totalitarian intent to transform peoples into dead souls; or when we have to do with the freedom of conscience to live according to God's Word a life worthy of living, then the word of our Holy Father applies: "There are values of such importance for human life in society, that their defense against an unjust attack is perfectly justified. A people which is menaced by an unjust attack or has already been attacked cannot persist in passive indifference if its intention is to act in a Christian way".

V. The obligation of defense does not involve only the state which is threatened or attacked; it is also the common obligation of the whole community of peoples. If this community of nations wishes to be a community of justice it cannot forsake the nation which is attacked and cannot leave the crime of aggressive warfare unrequited. The certainty that this duty will not be left unfulfilled can discourage the aggressor and thereby defend the peace. This also has been said by the Holy Father.

As long as the organization of the community of nations does not achieve this solidarity, it can happen under certain circumstances that weaker nations can be obliged to form defense alliances. When a State belongs to such a defensive alliance and fulfills the commitments which are necessary for a just defense, including its share of armaments, it thereby does nothing more than its duty toward its own citizens and toward the community of nations.

VI. Even in a justified defensive combat not every weapon is allowed. When man is completely unable to control the weapon, its use must be rejected as immoral. The claim that the effects of atomic weapons are in this sense uncontrollable must be evaluated as inaccurate according to the judgment of conscientious experts. Therefore, their use does not necessarily contradict the moral order and is not sin under all circumstances. It is an illegitimate generalization and an uncritical way of speaking, to speak of such defensive measures today as "suicide of whole peoples" or even of "all humanity". But on the other hand the demand is justified, that the control of the effects of atomic explosions, which in any case is desirable on military and technical grounds, should be further developed. Beyond this, the outlawing of all atomic weapons by agreements which will be universally binding and verifiable must be sought after. Until this goal is attained it remains, in any case, the obligation of all powers which possess atomic armament, to take every possible precaution to exclude effectively any possibility of catastrophes which might be caused by error or any other human or technical failure.

VII. This does not mean that we should accept as an unchallengeable factor in the given situation the armaments which claim so great material and personal expenditure. On the contrary, every possibility must be sought out and made the most of to free the nations from the oppressive slavery of the armament race and



to take from them the pressure of the entrenched power blocs. The goal of this disarmament must be to increase the chances for peace in the world without endangering the fairest possible security for all peoples. Toward this end neither the simple cessation of experiments with atom weapons nor a unilateral renunciation of their use, nor the creation of demilitarized zones will suffice. These measures must be bound up with a universal control of all armaments. This control is a decisive point at which every nation will demonstrate the sincerity of its desire of peace.

Admittedly disarmament includes readiness for risk and the courage of confidence. But it is not true that in all circumstances the initiative should be taken to strengthen mutual confidence, without any consideration of the danger of the abuse of a power disequilibrium which could thus be created. If we were to wait until God protects the non-christian, without men's doing themselves what is necessary to their defense. This would be not Christian trust in God but impertinence. The fact that God, under certain circumstances, will require of an individual the renunciation of defense and even martyrdom, does not change the obligation of states to defend effectively the order of justice.

VIII. Christian politics of peace must mean much more than a limitation of the possession and production of weapons. It demands further the removal of hatred, of covetness, of the search for power and of disrespect for justice. The present situation will not improve as long as some peoples are not ready to recognize the common moral goals of humanity.

Any honest peace politic, not only a Christian one, demands especially the overcoming of those economic, social, and political tensions within peoples, which so easily can lead to war or at least prevent an effective peace policy. It demands, in addition, the solidarity of a community of nations to overcome economic and social inequalities between peoples, especially between the economically favored and the underprivileged, as well as any exploitation of the weak.

A peace policy demands in addition every effort to bring the world nearer to peace and to the rule of law by means of honorable negotiation between equals.

He who truly wishes to overcome war and to achieve general disarmament must in addition support the development of international organs for the maintenance of peace, which on the basis of binding commitments of all truly peace loving states have the right and the might to nip every threatening aggressive war in the bud. In view of the experiences of recent years the authority of the United Nations should be strengthened, it should be freed from the veto right of those who judge on their own case, the competence of the international court for all international judicial conflicts should be made binding, all armaments should be controlled through organs of international law and all offenses against the order of peace should be branded as crimes and effectively punished. The liberation of all peoples, also of the great powers from anxiety over their future existence is worth a thousand times as much as the sovereignty which will need to be given up.

IX. If the goals of a Christian policy of peace are unchallengeable and definite, there may still remain differences of opinion among Christians concerning the path to its realization: differences of opinion concerning the degree to which the peace is actually in danger; differences of opinion as to whether a given measure is likely to increase or decrease the likeness of war; differences of opinion as to how the justifiable interests of one nation (our divided father land) or of one group of nations (for example the peoples in the totalitarian realm) can be brought into accord with the prior claims of a peaceful world order; differences of opinion concerning the destruction to be expected from modern weapons and the



relative weight of this destruction compared to the values which are endangered; differences of opinion concerning the degree to which certain commitments involve one nation in the errors or risks of other nations.

The oppressive weight of this set of pros and cons makes wishful thinking especially tempting. Such thinking tends, as the examples prove, to underestimate the menace as well as the difficulty of finding a truly possible way to overcome it. Christian politics must be realistic. Admittedly, where ever there are modern weapons their abuse is possible. But the greatest danger to peace in the modern world is still the existence of a power, armed with all the modern weapons, which considers the victory of its atheistic world view as the inevitable result of the process of history and in principle considers the use of all means toward hastening the imposition of this result to be justified. As long as this false teaching is present any trust in negotiations and agreements is poorly grounded. Its attitude of combat against the rest of the world makes it (Communism) incapable of trusting or meriting trust. Caution will, therefore, be justified as long as it (Communism) does not itself remove the reason for mistrust. We do not abandon the hope that this will happen one day.

The danger of false alternatives is no less great. The most dangerous of these alternatives is the claim that atomic armament leaves us only the choice between suicide and the subjection of Communism. The slogan is then "Better Red than dead." Those who speak this way fail to see that these would be the alternatives only in the case of an inequality of the level of armament; that on the other hand a measure of equality in armaments is perfectly able to favor real negotiations.

The strength of those peoples which reject totalitarianism is not grounded first of all in their possession of weapons. It is grounded in the truth that when freedom and existence are at stake for all, all are also able to also participate in the formation of political opinion. It works against the moral peace of democracy when one group within the population claims for itself the exclusive possession of understanding and conscience. It undermines democracy even more when in the conflict of opinions minority groups, claiming deeper insight or claiming to be more conscientious, taking advantage of men's fear of modern weapons, put pressure on the legitimate organs of the state by organized manifestations, and prevent these organs of state from doing what their conscience will demand. Just at a time when every weakening of their own judicial order's strength is an advantage for the adversary, the friends of freedom and peace should not undermine the authority of this order; for that would be to shake the very foundations of freedom and peace.

J.K. 10 June '58

#### Theological Atom Discussion

Ernst Wolf, Prof. of Church History and Historical Theology, Göttingen

Since the speech of Helmut Thielicke at last year's convention of the C. D. U. (Adenauer's party) more theological voices have spoken to the atomic question in Germany, both in the camp of the adversaries and that of the advocates of rearmament. All the arguments pro and con seem by now to have been presented sufficiently so that a general survey is possible, even if not all can be named in detail. What is decisive is the way of arguing, the formulation of the question itself.



The declaration of seven well-known Catholic moralists published in early May (1958) under the title "Atomic Armament" in the Bulletin of the German Federal Government shows clearly the limitations of many well-intentioned theological statements in the face of this question, brought to the fore by the government itself, which has caused the greatest crisis of confidence between government and people in West Germany: namely the question of atomic armaments in the Federal Republic. For that is what is at stake concretely, and not the highly ambiguous slogan: "Down with atomic death in the whole world." The decision must be made here, not bound to an illusory demand for a global disarmament, which everyone is in favor of for reasons which involve no commitment and no clarity of motive.

1. Those Catholic theologians and a few especially zealous Protestant members of the government party argue in a way which, on closer examination, is both pseudo-political - - - i.e. built on unrealistic political assumptions - - - and pseudo-theological - - - namely because it shifts the concrete ethical question which must be faced, onto the level of so-called real-political thinking and a general moral-theological theory of politics. Thus the question of atomic armaments is fitted into the framework of a more general question concerning the moral permissibility or even necessity of war, and one finds a conditional "yes" in the traditional doctrine of the "just war" as one expression of "legitimate defense" which is also permissible for Christians. This thesis was thinkable up until the 16th or 17th century. In the face of modern "war", especially if it be waged with "atomic weapons", and against the background of our recent experience that wars for the sake of a "just cause" can be undertaken and legitimized as "preventive defensive wars", the doctrine of the "just war" today is a fiction as obsolete as it is unrealistic; it can be used to legitimize any armament politics: first of the West, in principle however just as well as valid for the East. Because it is a general principle it "allows" atomic armament in principle for both sides; one cannot on this basis refuse to the "atheistic" East the right to follow the precedent of the "Christian" West.

This doctrine necessarily involves being able to consider atomic weapons as "weapons" in the traditional sense of the word. It must be possible to aim these weapons and their destructive effort must be relatively controllable. In fact the presuppositions of every theological acceptance of atomic weapons today include speculation concerning the so-called "clean" A-H Bombs of a possible future. This presupposition is, however, not a reality: it jumps with suspicious haste over the facts of extensive stock-piling of atomic weapons with uncontrollable effect and accepts the continuation of that technical experimentation which already is creating great danger for the life of this and coming generations.

The third argument for a conditioned "yes" is just abstractly theological; namely the calculation of the "amount" of the values thereby dependent upon the moral or physical existence of nations over against the destructive effect of atomic weapons, in order to obtain a border-line figure defining the permissibility of their use. Who can carry out such a calculation, even if one of these theologians were to affirm the thesis, that "the loss of external freedom is not so great as the acceptance of guilt" in the use of atomic weapons? The inadequacy of this approach is self-evident.



Protestant theologians as well often think in the terms of a theology of war from the 16th century and weigh - - - as it was done at the last Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany in the Synod's confession of impotence - - - situations "in which, under the duty of legitimate defense, resistance with equivalent weapons can be justified before God." Just in passing: it is quite characteristic of the thinking on that side of the question, that in keeping with the confusing language of the Federal Government which speaks of "the most modern" weapons, one speaks here of "equivalent" weapons and thereby already in the choice of terms hides the menacing reality of nuclear arms. A few theologians go so far as to claim the authority of the Reformation for the thesis that atomic "defense" must in the extreme case be dared as an action of love for a neighbor toward the prevention of "soul-murder." In this way arguments from the 16th century are taken over without examination in the attempt to understand war as "police action" and thereby to justify it within given limitations as an act of difficult neighbor-love. These are irresponsible anachronisms. A "yes" to atomic armament on the basis of these obsolete arguments is today as unbelievable as a "no" on the basis of an abstract moralistic pacifism, which in fact would be the better of the two if one had to choose between them. But both miss the seriousness of today's reality.

2. Still more dubious are the theological attempts being proposed to interpret as heilsgeschichtlich the atomic weapons which God has "put in our hands," and thereby to approve of them.
  - a. They can be interpreted as that power which holds off Chaos, which holds back the Antichrist, which used to be explained (probably wrongly) as the state, when Paul speaks of the "one which holds back." (II Thess.2:6)...
  - b. Or one can with the pseudo theology of Propst Asmussen . . . interpret atomic weapons as "the rod" of God (Isaiah 10) and then challenge the Christians of the "free world" to take hold of this rod, paying no attention to the fact that in the language of the Bible God's people itself is threatened with chastisement by the Lord's rod.
  - c. One pastor has claimed that the atomic weapons guarantee not only civil existence in union with the occidental powers but "perhaps also our salvation, for who is strong enough to defend his faith, and those of his children and the church members for whom he is responsible against the constant propaganda of Communism?" - - - and thereby simply denies the Gospel which a pastor is called to preach.
3. This heilsgeschichtlich interpretation and the previously mentioned ethical considerations have in common the presupposition that the "potential adversary", Bolshevism, is the absolute power of evil, Antichrist in person. This propaganda discovery of Nazism has become a universal menace in the so-called Christian Occident since 1945; universally dangerous not only because it prevents competent political action and negotiations, but also because by setting up the alternative: atomic warfare or Bolshevism, it blinds men to the special problems involved in their attitude toward the atomic weapons which are now available on both sides. Every reasonable and responsible consideration is trampled underfoot, and the discoverer of the interpretation of atomic weapons as "that which holds off" Chaos, which holds back the Antichrist. . . can then simply declare, "I would rather perish with my children in an atomic explosion than live under the pressure of Stalinism." He is comparing two possibilities, the one of which he has not yet tried and the other of which is incapable of experiential verification.



All of the theological answers dealt with thus far argue in a sense "politically", even though their sense of political reality and their capacity for taking into account historical experience is obviously lacking (George F. Kennan, for years United States Ambassador in Moscow, speaking in New York, May 5, 1957, said, "At no time since the end of the Second World War have I ever seen the proof that the Kremlin desires a Third World War") --- and even though they are convinced, because of their conformity with the policies of the Federal Government, that they are not mixing theology with politics. Of course, only the "opposition" does that . . . .

4. For the "opposition," insofar as it argues theologically - - - in decided distinction from the ethically untenable heilsgeschichtlich acceptance of atomic weapons - - - the question of atomic armaments is not primarily a political one (we can speak reasonably of political questions afterward), but rather a fundamental and prior theological question: is it right for a Man to do and to use everything which he is technically capable of doing and using? Is every means unconditionally admissible for his action within history? Can he take up such means without asking whether he still remains Man, i.e. a being characterized by ultimate responsibility; whether he is still free morally? Freedom is to be used in responsibility before God! Has he not already ceased to be Man before his possible physical destruction, if he is determined to use atomic weapons in the extreme case and if the first step of such determination is to arm himself with them? Is he not thereby beginning to betray precisely that which he desires to save: peace and freedom of Man and for Man? The well-known request of the Church Bruderschaften was thinking of this when it said among other things: . . . (here Professor Wolfe sights parts of articles 4,5,7,8 and 9 of the Request) . . . these Theses were attack in the Synod but not refuted. Their condemnation "as false doctrine" awaited by numerous theologians and bishops of the government party, who had already earlier spoken against a so-called "theological rejection of power," could not be attained. But the Synod as a whole then failed to find any word which would resolve the conflict, partly because her discussions, in spite of everything, were more those of a parliament than those of a Synod "under the Word of God."
5. Because in the face of atomic danger we have to do with the very humanity of Man, the Church cannot remain neutral. She stands in solidarity with the needs of the world, she is the Church "for the world," or else she betrays her commission. She must therefore not let herself be told (as she is repeatedly told by some theologians, to the applause of interested politicians and with the assent of their own comfort and undecidedness) that this is "political" matter, which does not concern her. She must not remain "neutral"; this is a burden of the final Thesis of the Request of the Bruderschaften, rightly: (No. 10) In the face of this question, the opposing point of view (namely, against the rejection of atomic weapons) or neutrality cannot be advocated Christianly. Both mean the denial of all three articles of the Christian faith." Neither must she let herself be entangled in the delusion that she must participate in a battle of ideologies between the "Christian Occident" and "Godless Bolshevism", between the "Free West" and Eastern Dictatorship", by the theological legitimation of atomic armaments.

The Church, at least the Protestant Church, defends no such ideologies and corresponding ideals; she defends Man as Man against himself. She defends not an ideal of "freedom" (which as a rule, when examined most closely, is identical with western materialism), but she provides through her Word for that freedom which commands and makes possible for Man a responsible, reasonable



service to the human existence of his neighbors. This service includes preservation against all threats against that life which has been entrusted to Man, both his own and that of the neighbor, for both the present and coming generations. From this point of view the alternatives: atomic mass murder or Bolshevik "soul murder", is inadmissible for the Christian. It would mean a denial of the Christian responsibility for the world as God's creation. Atomic weapons are in no sense a means which can be advocated Christianly toward the end of overcoming Bolshevism. For the sake of the humanity of Man, Christian thinking must free itself from the distorted image of such alternatives. For this reason the statement of the Swiss Theologian, Emil Brunner, is false, "that by propagation unconditional pacifism one becomes the fellow traveler of unscrupulous bellicism." It once again formulates an abstract, unreal set of alternatives and thereby seeks to smother the attempt to dare a first step in the direction of a realization of a community of confidence, in which alone there is hope, by measures such as the cessation of atomic experiments on the side of Russia and the renunciation of atomic armament for the Federal Republic. When placed before such false alternatives the Christian has not to "choose", but to reject both with determination for the sake of Man. It is precisely the Evangelical theologians and politicians, who should remind themselves daily that an absolute rejection of every crusading ideology belongs to the essential acquisitions of the Reformation. The combat against evil must rather be fought out within Man himself, i.e. in the rejection of every attempt of Man to overstep the bounds which have been set for him and to make himself Lord over life and death.

Atomic armament is today, seen from a Christian point of view, the great temptation of Man to lose himself, to sacrifice the reasonableness of the heart to bare intellect, to deny his essential responsibility in the name of presumed "responsibilities".

In the warning against atomic armaments, which obviously must be applied concretely to individuals, nothing is said out of "atomic fear" - - - a psychosis of anxiety is rather at the origin of the armament race - - - what is speaking is a quite different fear, namely that of sinning against God and His creation. Woe to the theologians who use their craft to recommend to Christians a "good conscience", where the real "murder of souls" has already begun; who preach salvation where destruction is visibly present; who believe in atomic weapons because they no longer expect everything of God; who in the name of their "reasonableness" and their "realism" and because the world is now "under the power of sin", betray all reason, all sense of reality, and their message that Christ has conquered sin. These are the ones who make it impossible to deal soberly with the question of atomic armament as a political question and to deal with the numerous political arguments against atomic armaments in the Federal Republic with the care, patience, and persistence which the organization demands. This also belongs to the service to the humanity of Man which is the Christian's mission.

J.K. 10, June '58

#### Karl Barth on Decision in Faith and Unity in Faith

Time does not permit obtaining authorization to reprint a section of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics which found a prominent place in recent debate in Germany. The passage is found in Vol. I/2 on pages 629-631 of the English translation. He



He argues that a Christian confession of faith is only definite and binding if it also rejects definitely the error against which it takes a position. Thus the old creeds often include an anathema or damnamus section. "Without the No the Yes would obviously not be a Yes, but a Yes and No," not the Yes of valid confession. This of course brings one face to face with the accusation that one is judging those who think otherwise. Such an accusation is no grounds for withdrawing the concreteness of the confession, nor for mitigating its bindingness. "Anathema sit does not mean 'let him be accursed' but 'in conformity with reality let him find himself in the eyes of the whole Church outside the unity of the Church, with his counter-doctrine.'" The seriousness of the anathema involved in valid confession should keep us from haste in taking positions which we claim are right; "but the danger is no reason why we should not pronounce the No which is inseparably bound up with the confession made in obedience to the Word of God."

## V. Early October

### Study Conference in Frankfurt

Summary of Questions Addressed to the Bruderschaften in Response to the Ten Theses. Summarized by Dr. Dieter Georgi from 18 Articles written by 18 different Authors, in addition to the Declaration of 7 Catholic moralists.

(It is remarkable --- and characteristic --- that all of the theologians who have criticized the Ten Theses take essentially the same position, whether they be Lutheran, Catholic, or journalists ... D.G.)

1. a.) The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the essential Christian message. The validity of this message is independent of current events and must not be influenced by them.
- b.) Does not the "Request" of the Bruderschaften place themes in the foreground which are secondary and pseudo-theological, in reality only political and philosophical, in the interest of a misunderstood "relevance"?
2. a.) The testimony to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ takes place in complete objectivity in the ministry of the Divine Word through word and sacrament on the basis of Scripture and confession. For this reason declarations as to doctrine must be made in an orderly way by authorized organs of the Church in a binding intent.
- b.) Do not the Ten Theses raise a subjective opinion to the level of ecclesiastical bindingness without ecclesiastical authorization? Does their claim to authority not lie principally in an emotional sense of mission to political prophecy, without any real authority?
3. a.) In the face of the errors and confusion of the world, especially in the face of Bolshevik ideology it is wholesome for the Church to possess a solid doctrinal basis, which she has in the interpretation of Scripture by the Lutheran Confessional Writings.
- b.) Do not the Ten Theses substitute for this a dogmatic and ethical occasionalism which not only gives no solid ground, but in fact destroys what little solidity there was?
4. a.) Certainly the Church has a responsibility as sentinel for the world. She



must raise her voice in reprimand and warning when the order established by God is infringed upon and when God's order of redemption is interfered with. The Church's responsibility as sentinel also applies when injustice is practiced openly and consciously (atheistic education, oppression, pogroms, inhuman and illegal imprisonment) and when the Church is interfered with in her own activity (the freedom of preaching, education, and charity).

- b.) Is not this office of sentinel misused and its effectiveness weakened when it leads to an immediate involvement in day-to-day politics and leads to decisions involving questions of political judgment?
5. a.) The status confessionis exists when the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of God's mercy and the sole authority of Jesus Christ is falsified and misrepresented within or without the Church; or when the government fails to fulfill or openly rejects its God-given commission to maintain order and to defend what is good and right.
    - b.) Can it truly be claimed with valid reasons that the arming of the German army with atomic weapons is being planned unconscientiously, frivolously, or with evil or murderous intent? Can it be said of those representatives of the Church who support the political position of the Federal Government, that they intend to deny or to dissolve the Divine Order of preservation and the sole authority of Jesus Christ? Has the existence of the status confessionis not been proclaimed frivolously and hastily without a careful examination of the ecclesiastical, theological, and political situation? Do we not have to use here an exaggerated prophetic self-confidence which claims to be able to anticipate an ecclesiastical decision but in reality makes of a partisan political opinion a decisive question for faith? Has this not been driven to the point of total anathema in a way which has never been seen in Church history?
  6. a.) The center of Scripture is the Message of God's love and of the justification of the sinner for Christ's sake.
    - b.) Does not the authoritarian way of speaking of the Theses which speaks "regardless of all other considerations" (Thesis 8) betray the love of God and set up a new legalism and self-justification?
  7. a.) The justification of the sinner on the ground of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only consolation of the world and the decisive factor in the redemption of the world from the demonic and the ideological; in spite of its seeming irrelevance it is the only real help.
    - b.) Do not the Theses in the attempt to be more concrete, offer to the world political passion instead of this consolation and thereby ideologize the problem in an unwholesome way? Can one get rid of a crusading mentality by means of another crusade?
  8. a.) The task of the Church, especially today, is to bring the consolation of the preaching of justification by Christ to the statesman, the politician, the armaments expert, the technician and especially the soldier and to send them back to their responsible activity with a reassured conscience so that they may do courageously what is theirs to do.
    - b.) Does not the condemnation of all modern armaments mean the exclusion of all these persons from pastoral care, as we see in the fact that the chaplaincy has been challenged? Is such a limitation of the Church's



pastoral responsibility permissible?

9. a.) The Resurrection of Jesus Christ created a new world, the new Aeon. But this new Age remains hidden to the world and evident only to faith until the Eschaton.
- b.) Is this hidden Lordship of Christ not transformed into a fanatical Christocracy which anticipates the Eschaton and wants to make the new Aeon tangible in this Aeon of sin and death?
10. a.) By virtue of the coexistence of the old Aeon with the new, by virtue of the coexistence of sin and justification, Christian ethics can speak only dialectically.
- b.) Is not this simultaneity abandoned in favor of an apparently unequivocal legalism and a fanatical view of sanctification by the actualizing and over-simplification of the conception of sin?
11. a.) Christian ethics consists of the proper relationship of Law and Gospel.
- b.) By giving the Gospel precedence before the Law is not the Gospel subordinated to the Law and the Law given sole authority for the present?
12. a.) Genuine theology is aware of the constant seige of the demonic powers against the Divine Orders of creation and preservation as well as against the new Aeon. But genuine theology is also aware of the greatness of the power of God and of his ultimate victory and his future glory.
- b.) Is not this genuine theology of history replaced by speculation which absolutizes the present situation after the manner of the German Christians and ultimately places its faith in the victory of men and not the eternal victory of God?
13. a.) Even if it should be possible to eliminate not only atomic warfare but all warfare, the belligerent spirit of Man is not changed.
- b.) Do not the words of the Bruderschaften give the impression that it might be possible to realize the peace of God here on earth?
14. a.) God exercises his authority over this world in the form of two Regiments; as deus absconditus in the Regiment of the State (Order of Preservation), as deus revelatus in that of the Church (Order of Redemption). The two Regiments and the two Orders may neither be separated nor confused.
- b.) Does not the making of political demands which claim to be ecclesiastical confessions mean a confusion of the two Regiments?
15. a.) Because God gave Orders to the world to preserve the world from chaos it is the task of Christian theology, in believing realism, to make clear the characteristics and the purposes of these Orders and to participate in their preservation and improvement as they are repeatedly interfered with by the sin of Man and the wrath of God.
- b.) Does not an apparently creative actualism and situation ethics undermine these Orders and thereby assist the spread of disorder and anarchy?



16. a.) What the Lutheran Confessional Writings mean by "Government" does not cease to apply in a democratic State. In the contemporary State there is a hierarchy of responsibilities; the parliamentarian and especially the minister bear an exceptional measure of responsibility.
- b.) Does not the conception of democracy as meaning that all bear responsibility indiscriminately mean an inadmissible undermining of the authority of government and make impossible demands of the individual citizen who has neither the office nor the necessary information to make a valid decision? Do not the statements of the Bruderschaften, unauthorized and insufficiently informed, have the result of discrediting all ecclesiastical statements, by earning for them the reputation of unrealistic slogans struck by persons who themselves do not bear the statesman's burden of conscience?
17. a.) On the ground of her spiritual experience the Christian Church counts on a God who works wonders. This is an awareness based upon faith, which therefore belongs in the Order of Redemption.
- b.) Can this spiritual knowledge be made into a political demand? Can hope and prayer replace political reason? Is faith in God a panacea for the problems of this Aeon? Would this not mean an inadmissible identification of the people of Israel with the German nation? Does this not thereby betray a German-Christian sense of being the elect?
18. a.) The world-wide fears aroused by the powers of destruction discovered and used by Man simply makes still clearer what the Christian always knew: that the Lordship over the world which Man has usurped delivers him into the hands of the powers of destruction.
- b.) Does not the claim that the world has been changed by modern weapons mean that our awareness of the fallenness of the world has become unclear so that our understanding of the Order of Preservation, especially of the State, also suffers?
19. a.) Because fallen Man is evil and seeks to acquire domination over others, God has ordained that power should be limited by other power in order to protect the world against itself. Thus armaments responding to armaments means the safeguard of peace and of what is essentially human.
- b.) If it is demanded that one of the two sides should renounce M.M.A. does this not mean an abandoning of the divine Order of Preservation, when the world is divided as it is today between two blocs? Does this not actually invite the adversary to wage war and therefore destroy that essential humanity which one seeks to preserve?
20. a.) It is the legitimate task of government to hold in check both internal and external chaos and thereby to keep the peace. The use of violence always means its misuse, both in the self-justification of Man before God and in injustice toward the neighbor. Nevertheless and in spite of this frightful limitation of the divine Order the justification of sinners remains valid especially at this point, if the use of force occurs in the defense of the legitimate Orders and Gifts of God.
- b.) In saying that a legitimate war might have been possible, previously, but not longer is today, does not one fail to recognize the dialectic character of all statesmanship and thereby to make impossible the genuine testimony



of the Church to the State --- particularly the instruction of conscience concerning the protection of the Orders and the Gifts of God?

21. a.) Violence as such has always been neutral. Only its use gives it a moral character, and this in the dialectal way referred to above.
- b.) Does not the claim that the modern intensification of the power of destruction has made a qualitative change in the nature of war over-simplify this complicated ethical question and make of it simply a question as to which means are permitted?
22. a.) But even if one can speak today of a "rebellion of the means" (i.e. of the tools against their maker) making impossible a responsible use of modern weapons, one must recognize at the same time that mutual mistrust stands in the way of disarmament.
- b.) Is the demand for atomic disarmament not superficially oriented around the symptoms of our contemporary dilemma, failing to see the deeper political and moral causes?
23. a.) This mutual mistrust of both blocs can only be removed step by step and hand in hand with internationally controlled disarmament and the improvement of institutions of international law. It would be wrong to run the risk of a unilateral "demonstration of confidence" because the risk is too great in terms of the number of persons involved and furthermore because the emotional attitude of large groups cannot be tested.
- b.) Is not the question; "atomic war --- yes or no?" fully superficial? Does it not demand of the States of the West that they run the risk of confidence in a way which can only be asked of an individual; is it not irresponsible to think that thereby the adversary whom one admits to be godless will be converted to an equally sweeping confidence?
24. a.) Even though it is extremely difficult to decide clearly between good and evil in a given situation, nevertheless one must admit that in spite of the practical materialism of the West, the Divine Orders and Gifts --- particularly human freedom and dignity --- are defended in the West and not in the East . . . .
- b.) Do not the words of the Bruderschaften demonstrate an unthankful lack of respect for the possibility given to Man in the West to be fully human? Do they not show at the same time an optimism concerning the imperialistic dictatorship of Bolshevism which is hard to understand in people who fought the dictatorship of the Third Reich? What has become of the command, "resist evil"?
25. a.) Atomic equilibrium, i.e. the development of this conception out of the idea of progressive deterrence, presupposes that neither side will use these weapons. What is open to question is whether the value of this strategy depends upon the readiness to use the weapons. In any case the equilibrium of force has maintained peace and order de facto.
- b.) Does not the criticism of the Bruderschaften equate this strategy of equilibrium with the preparation of an aggressive war of atomic annihilation, claiming that atomic warfare is a necessary result of atomic armament, and refusing to admit the already proven historical fact that it has preserved the peace?



26. a.) Certainly a realistic atomic strategy must reckon with the possibility that the equilibrium might break down and issue in catastrophe before general disarmament could be achieved. Still this possibility must be weighed against the other extreme possibility, that of capitulation in the face of Bolshevism with the result of universal spiritual annihilation.
- b.) Do the Bruderschaften reckon with this spiritual annihilation at least as an extreme possibility of their strategy or do they cover up this consequence by speaking of God's gracious protection --- to which one could appeal just as well in the case of the other alternative? Is the responsibility for spiritual killing less than that for bodily killing?
27. a.) The contemporary political situation makes it impossible for an individual State to make its own decisions for or against armament. An individual decision (for example an atomic "strike" by Germany) would provoke a chain reaction which would destroy the international equilibrium and thereby call forth chaos.
- b.) Do not the Theses of the Bruderschaften betray an unwholesome lack of awareness of the international political situation and a proud over-estimation of Germany's own strength?
28. a.) The ethical question involved in atomic armament cannot be subdivided. There is only the question of principle, whether atomic armaments are justified at all. Whether Germany should arm atomically is only a political question which must be seen and decided after the question of principle.
- b.) Do not the Bruderschaften reverse the order in which the question must be treated? Do they not absolutize one aspect of the atomic question? Is their thinking not hypocritical because it takes place against the assured background of the atomic armaments of the West?
29. a.) Nonviolence cannot be subdivided. He who does not accept weapons must not accept either that someone else defends him.
- b.) Is it clear to the Bruderschaften that they have no choice left, apart from consistent pacifism? But are they also aware of what this means in a modern total society? Can this ever be a binding ethical approach?

Extract From A Letter From Professor Karl Barth To The Church Bruderschaften.  
(Excusing himself from the meeting in Frankfurt, October 2-4, 1958.)

.....It is perhaps also good if I am not there in person---among other reasons because the younger generation must learn to push more and more into the front lines and to fight the battles which must be waged on the practical-theological front, on the basis of their own insight and responsibility. ....This, however, does not mean that I in any way withdraw from my preoccupation with the problems to be dealt with in Frankfurt. These problems have also become significant here in Switzerland in a very special way, and demand my daily attention. The West-German Bruderschaften, having their origin in, and belonging with, what happened 25 years ago, should be assured that I am with them wholeheartedly and stand behind them, always, but especially in the concern which disturbs them now, and that I shall continue to do so in the future all the more joyously, the more they continue the pathway upon which they have entered, free of all profundity and despair, clear and decided, uncompromisingly and consistently. What was the rumor spread about in Germany's newspapers, "that Professor Barth is not theologically in agreement with the Ten



Theses of the Request"? You may say to all and to everyone, that I am in agreement with these Theses (including the 10th..), as if I had written them myself, and that I desire nothing more earnestly than that they should be maintained and interpreted worthily, convincingly, and joyfully, but in principle unbendingly, in Frankfurt and thereafter in all the Evangelical Church in Germany.

Whether the Frankfurt meeting will be a "success" is a secondary question beside what I wish you all: namely, that it be dominated and determined by a good spirit of "discipleship"! (Note: The words "success" and "discipleship" in German are built on the same verb stem.)

J.K. 10, Oct. '58

### Theological Declaration of the Bruderschaften

To the question: "What does it mean to confess Jesus Christ in a world facing the atomic menace?", the representatives of the Church Bruderschaften in Germany (approximately 180 persons, including 31 from East Germany), assembled in Frankfurt, October 2-4, 1958, answer:

I. The Christian Church proclaims Jesus Christ as the one Revealer of the one gracious Will of God. Thereby, she confesses that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the world. All realms of life, in which men seek truth, establish justice, and exercise power, are in subjection to Him. This truth is hidden to the world, but certain for the Church in faith.

There are no values, orders, principles, or ideals for human life, through which the one Word of God, Jesus Christ, may be interpreted, limited, or suspended; it is rather the case that the recognition and the application of such values and orders, principles and ideals, must constantly be limited, interpreted, and corrected by Him.

II. Jesus Christ died on the cross that we, having died to sin, should live to Him in good works in the power of His resurrection.

The saving deed of Jesus Christ is denied if it is not preached, as both consolation and command. The assurance of justification is always, at the same time, the call to a turning-about in sanctification. Just as justification justifies the sinner completely, so also sanctification applies to our whole life. Therefore, even our political existence is fully subject to the demand for believing obedience.

III. The new life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ involved in the active co-responsibility of the Church and the individual for the preservation of human life and therefore also for the maintenance of that human order of justice which is made possible by God's patience. Christian faith recognizes the State as a means used by God in His grace for the preservation of the life of men, to whom the Gospel must be preached until the end of the age. The whole responsibility of the Christian for a state consists in reminding the bearers of political authority, by the proclamation of the Gospel and by corresponding behavior, of their Divine Commission to preserve human life; to help them in the fulfillment of their duty and protect them against the abuse of their power. Thus our action belongs to the Reign of Christ, who thereby manifests His kingdom to the world and reveals His strength in our weakness (c.f. Apology for the Augsburg Confession, IV, 189).

In awareness of this co-responsibility, we must testify that to include the means of mass annihilation in the arsenal of usable means of the State's exercising



authority and threatening with force, can only be done in factual denial of the Will of God, who is faithful to His creation and gracious to man. Such behavior is not possible for Christians. To take a position of neutrality towards this thing which we recognize as sin cannot be reconciled with the confession of Jesus Christ. Every attempt to justify theologically such behavior and such neutrality leads to false doctrine, creates confusion, and invalidates the Will of the Triune God. He who understands our warning against the means of mass annihilation as an invitation to believe in the promise of the Gospel, has understood us properly.

This knowledge acquired under the Word of God binds us together in a community of witness and of deed and commits us to appropriate action.

J.K. 10, Oct. '58

The Significance of the Frankfurt Session of Bruderschaften  
for the Dialogue in the EKID.

Prof. Wolfgang Schweitzer

The detailed results of the Frankfurt meeting are not yet available...a few comments are, however, already possible on the basis of the "Theological Declaration"--- possible and also necessary, because this text has already been misinterpreted by some who would have preferred that we remain completely silent or take back everything that was said before. Although we have done neither of these, we can say with good grounds that we have attempted to express ourselves in such a way as to facilitate the Dialogue in the EKID. This happened, as one of our work papers said, "in the hope that the unity of faith will express itself also in these questions (i.e. the problem of the church's testimony with regard to modern weapons) and in the very midst of wrestling for unity."

There is no reason to attempt to hide the fears which also moved some of us. There was a complaint that many would have liked to make something like a free confessional Synod out of the meeting which had been announced officially as a study conference; I must say that I was not able to find anyone who really thought and said that. On the contrary, I can only certify that the leaders of the conference were very concerned not to change its character. It can be said emphatically that there was at no time a danger that the Bruderschaften should form a kind of political sect. There was truly no other intention than to review and to state again more precisely the position which had been taken in the Request of the Synod of the EKID. In this connection it is obvious that the question whether the notorious Thesis 10 of this Request would be maintained or not played a great role. Members of the Bruderschaften also participated in this meeting who had not signed the Request because of the Tenth Thesis.

The work of the conference, however, did not begin at this point (it would not have been a sensible place to begin) but dealt primarily with the relationship of faith and ethos and with the search for the significance of the concept of the "status confessionis". In the proceeding discussions it had become clear that this is where the real theological controversy lay, which had to be dealt with thoroughly for the sake of the clarity of future dialogue. Both of these problem areas are (especially in their application to the churches attitude to modern weapons) so involved in one another that at the end of the conference the necessity of a new formulation was self-evident.

In order not to lose sight of previous discussions very careful preliminary work



had been done. Several work-groups had prepared drafts, and the Heidelberg Assistant Professor, Dr. Georgi, had compiled a catalogue of 29 arguments of the "other" side, to which constant reference was made. I must, in fact, admit that the objections were more impressive in this form than in the so often illogically formulated writings of the "adversaries". Even though the latter were not present themselves, because the conference aimed primarily at a review of our own position, we can assure them that we made a great effort to hear exactly what they are saying---perhaps more exactly than they themselves would like.

In the realm of the theme, "Faith and Ethos", it soon became evident that an evangelical theology, especially one influenced by Luther, must not on the one hand set faith and ethos on the same level (for instance, in a way that good works could prove the presence of true faith); but on the other hand neither can ethos be separated from faith (for instance, in teaching that good works stand in the way of salvation). Our adversaries obviously fear that we are giving a too great theological weight to ethical questions; i.e., that we lean toward fanaticism. We must ask in return whether there is not today a dangerous tendency in the direction of the Antinomians, who would prefer to leave the Decalogue "to the townhall" and no longer take seriously the preaching of the commands of God. In order to avoid both errors a memoir which was presented to the conference and will be published, spoke of the "irreversibility" of the relationship of faith and action: though ethical decision is the God-given confirmation of faith, faith is testified to, but not proven thereby. In the same connection it was emphasized that according to evangelical doctrine it is permissible neither for the Christian to sin in confidence in forgiveness, nor for the preaching of the Church to capitulate to the sinfulness of man in such a way that one would suddenly cease to call sin by its name, or rather: cease to hold up God's commands over against sin.

Now it is obviously the case in the EKID that we consider something to be sin which others hold to be an action reconcilable with faith. This is a condition full of tension, but it is certainly not the first time in the world that the Church experiences it. To cite once again the above mentioned memorandum: "The Bible also tells how in both the Old and New Covenant peoples certain ways of behavior were suddenly and irreversibly labeled as sin by a living proclamation of the Word, ways of acting which until that time one had thought could be approved of. Just as it now seems no longer possible to Christians to accept slave-holding as an act of faith (another example could be torture), so we must today recognize in the phenomenon of the M.M.A., that the limitless waging of so-called total war is something for which Christians can no longer share the responsibility." The central question of the theological dialogue which we hope will begin here therefore takes a form something like this: is the use of M.M.A. possible for faith, in the same way that Luther the use of the sword for professional soldiers to be possible (or even necessary) for faith? We must remind our partners in this Dialogue that in asking the question in this way we are challenging noone's faith; faith is rather presupposed. The question is, what action should follow faith? At the same time we ask our interlocutors very earnestly, "Is your faith not too weak after all, is it not after all disobedience, is it not becoming unbelief, when you think that this action can be reconciled with it?" But this is a question which one must obviously raise in every theological dialogue related to ethics if one does not intend to remain hopelessly immersed in noncommittal speculations. Since we assume that no one in the EKID wants that, we may well ask that the seriousness of our question should no longer be avoided by the claim that it contradicts the doctrine of justification which is the center of evangelical preaching. Against such a misuse of the Gospel of Justification we can do nothing but exclaim in sharpest protest---and therein we know ourselves to be one with Martin Luther.



Secondly, the Frankfurt Conference dealt in detail with the question of the "status confessionis". Whereas what had been said about also found expression in the Theological Declaration, that could not be done in the same form with this question, by the nature of the case. The confusion at this point was especially great. It should probably be said that something like the following attitude was generally accepted at Frankfurt: the concept "status confessionis" must be understood in connection with the testimony of the Word which has been entrusted to the Church. That is its real emphasis. Also in its historical origin (The Augsburg Interim) the concept does not include the idea of desiring to separate oneself from others but the emphasis is rather that one finds himself bound to confess something which others consider to be an Adiaphoron (i.e. a question of purely personal judgment); in fact something which one, oneself had perhaps previously so considered. The first question is therefore: how will the world receive this testimony? If the world lets it be said, the situation is not too dramatic; if the world resists, then the "status confessionis" applies in the proper sense: the Church has nothing to do but to share faithfully the suffering which this might involve for her. At this point, it should surely be possible, to agree rapidly within the EKID.

What is meant by the application of this concept to the relation of Christians to one another? Is it possible or permissible to understand it as anything else than an invitation to share in the testimony before the world which is commanded? I think not. In any case I have never been able to understand it otherwise. Perhaps others hear something else when this concept is used because confessio for them means not the act of confessing but the textually fixed confession of the Church; this, of course, is an old point of controversy within the confessing church. But precisely for this reason we should be able to expect that others know that most of us are concerned first of all with the act of confessing. It is, therefore, out of place to attempt to hold against us the "other" concept of confession.

This, of course, does not mean that we fail to respect the fixed confessions, such as, for instance, that of Augsburg. To the contrary: we are deeply convinced that we have Augsburg, Article 16, on our side. What do our adversaries do with the modifying clause in Article 16, where we read, that Christians are "obligated to be subject to government and obedient to its orders and laws in everything, which can be done without sin"? Is it really so obvious that one can handle M.M.A. "without sin"?

The emphasis on the act of confessing does not mean either that we believe that the conflicting convictions with regard to the confessing which is demanded of us today can remain permanently as they are without the Church losing her believability before the world, which means failing to respect her loyalty to her Lord. Our interlocutors understand us correctly if they hear out of our testimony this degree of seriousness. But still they should attempt more than they have done thus far to understand our Requests and other statements as invitations. Basically, we simply invited the Synod of the EKID to remain on the standpoint of the testimony on the M.M.A. which was spoken in 1956, and further to develop it. No one has been able to make plausible to me for what theological reasons a portion of the Synod could be driven suddenly to revoke their own earlier testimony. As long as this is not explained it should not be held against us when we have difficulty in avoiding the impression that other than theological motives have played a decisive role here. This makes all the more pressing our invitation to return to the earlier common testimony.

It follows necessarily from both of these considerations---on the one hand the relationship of faith and action, on the other the question of the status confessionis---that we could not simply and literally repeat at Frankfurt the Tenth Thesis of the Request to the Synod. Participants in the conference were



from the very start in agreement, as some of the preparatory papers already showed, that the Request had never been intended as a personal rejection of any of our interlocutors. We first thought of expressing this in the Third Thesis of the Frankfurt Declaration, so to speak by surrounding the Tenth Thesis of the Request with a text which should defend it against misinterpretation. It however soon became clear that that was not sufficient. Certain expressions of the Tenth Thesis remained in the text, but others were modified because they have been misunderstood repeatedly. The most significant change is that the phrase, "both mean the denial of the Three Articles of the Christian faith" (which had been misunderstood as a personal condemnation), was replaced by a warning against false teaching which threatens our Church. Here those who preach the Word of God in our Church are spoken to; they are called to be aware of the relationship between the Doctrine of Justification and that of Sanctification. They cannot escape their mission, which is to call by its name sin which has been recognized as such - - - regardless of whether those who hear the Word wish to accept it or not. Even the awareness that we can never act "sinlessly" must never mislead us to silence in the face of sin. Obviously this does not mean questioning a personal faith of any preacher or teacher - - - it is, in fact, not even claimed that false doctrine is manifestly present; it is simply said, "Every attempt to justify theologically such behavior and such neutrality leads to false doctrine, creates confusion, and invalidates the Will of the Triune God." Thus, these "attempts" would need to be further developed in order to be true heresy - - - further developed, for example, in the direction of an unequivocal antinomianism. We deeply hope that God will prevent this. For when one wants to justify something in a truly theological way it must very soon become evident that such "attempts" must be unsuccessful. Theologians who should attempt this would find arising an untenable contradiction between the confession of faith which they exposit doctrinally, and that which they teach in their ethics and preach from their pulpits as God's present Will. The last words of the Tenth Thesis were thus an abbreviation, pointing in the most forceful way to the conviction that in ethics as well as in doctrine, all of faith is involved and all of faith hangs thereby in the balance. This connection between faith and obedience is what matters; we cannot, Evangelical ethics cannot sacrifice this. On the other hand the impression should not be given that the belief or unbelief of a given person could be automatically measured by the yardstick of his attitude to certain ethical problems. We can only appeal to the faith of our interlocutors; invite them to faith, as is so clearly said in the closing words of the Frankfurt Declaration. Should this not be the sole legitimate task of theologians in the Church, also in the domain of ethics; inviting to faith, that we might learn better how to act in faith?

We therefore hope that the clarification which the Bruderschaften and others who stand near to them have undertaken will felicitate the necessary further conversation in the EKID. If asked whether we have "taken back" the Tenth Thesis, I should answer that we have attempted to move farther forward. We have not been able to take back the warning expressed in the Tenth Thesis, the connection between faith and action must not be broken. Seen in this light the new formulation is only a clarification, made necessary by our effort to listen to one another. In another sense we cannot move back to the earlier formulation, in light of the fact that many have now joined us who had not done so because of the previous wording. Our interlocutors will no longer be able to cite the misunderstood brief formulation without raising a suspicion that they are not interested in the progress of the conversation. The conversation must progress for the sake of the testimony which God demands of us all.



## Concerning the Objections to Thesis Ten of the Bruderschaften

Heinz Kloppenburg

The objections which have been raised against the tenth Thesis of the Request of the Bruderschaften to the Synod often show in a passionate way that readers and hearers have felt themselves to be condemned. Even some men who would agree to the basic concern of the Theses raise a serious question about the tenth Thesis which seems to them to be a personal condemnation of people who think otherwise. . . .

In understanding Thesis 10 one must not fail to see that it is directed against a very particular adversary. It opposes an advocacy of the acceptance of atomic weapons which has been repeatedly argued in the debate within the churches and which claims that atomic weapons can be accepted on the basis of love for the neighbor. . . .

It was also said very clearly in the theological work of the Frankfurt meeting of the Bruderschaften that personal condemnation does not come into question. "Status confessionis" expresses nothing more than the awareness that this is a point where the Church must speak. But this is something which the Berlin Synod also said.

- a) The Request to the Synod spoke clearly of what the Church should say and teach on this question. Perhaps Thesis Ten would have been better understood if it had been formulated: the teaching that one may accept the use of the atomic bomb or remain neutral on the question is not Christianly possible, or must be labeled as false doctrine. This would have made it more clear that we are dealing with the question of the teaching of the Church. And this formulation would evidently be more tolerable for many critics than the terms of the Request, although many of us fail to see why this should be.
- b) Besides this statement about the Church's doctrine, which was submitted to the Synod with the expressed request that it be critically examined, Thesis Ten contains in addition an element of personal confession. Those who subscribed declare that for them to take discipleship seriously means indeed that they consider an opposed view or neutrality not to be possible. Our adversaries repeatedly declared that they have no intention to interfere with anyone who saw himself driven to make this his personal confession. But this means: "You can freely confess this as long as you let me in peace with my differing confession." This opens the door for an attempt to escape the seriousness of the request. For when such a personal confession is spoken within the Church it is not permitted simply to neutralize it by saying, "You think thus, I think otherwise," but rather there must take place a serious testing on both sides; each must ask himself whether the brother who thinks otherwise might not be right. What is hard for the Bruderschaften to understand is the fact that repeatedly churchmen, instead of taking a position and answering, even if they had to do so brutally (but theologically), withdraw behind their feeling that they have been personally offended and do not answer at all. When a brother in the Church responds to me in this way I must of course ask myself whether my formulation has provoked him to such a response. But this readiness to re-examine one's own formulation must be met on the other side by a readiness to discuss the issues themselves with those who have stated such aggressive theses. . . . I trust that the Frankfurt Theological Declaration contributes significantly to the elimination of the misunderstandings which have arisen. . . . But the issue itself for which the Bruderschaften stand has not been softened by Frankfurt; the request that it be tested in the light of Scripture and confession has been made clearer and it has once again been expressly said by the Bruderschaften that the Thesis intended



nothing but a challenge to take discipleship seriously and a plea to the whole Church: "He who understands our warning against M.M.A. as an invitation to believe in the promise of the Gospel has understood us properly."

J. K. Nov. 1958

## VI. France: Ecumenical Study Commission

### Christians and the Prevention of War in the Atomic Age

(Extract from a Report Prepared by a Commission for Ecumenical Studies of the Protestant Federation of France - - - May, 1958; supplemented with Comments of Henri Roser, Maurice Voge, Jean Lasserre)

#### I. Theological Foundations

- A. Christian revelation uncovers the hidden sources of conflict hidden within man himself. One may sight, for example, the power of falsehood which involves not only man's ability to fool his neighbor but also that of fooling himself. Man can, thus, succeed in having a good conscience while committing acts which he would reprove in the conduct of another. We discover here the reality and the activity of a power of darkness, a Prince of this World, who seeks always to pass unnoticed and who understands natural man better than man understands himself.

Another source of conflict lies in the situation in which man lives as creature. Cut off from his roots, wounded in his will since the fall, he has a confused feeling - - - and sometimes anxiety - - - because he knows his efforts to be in vain and, not understanding himself, he welcomes as a liberation every explanation of his suffering which does not incriminate him.

Thus man always seeks to blame the neighbor for everything which, within himself, makes his life intolerable. All violence and all conflict springs from this impure fountain, the heart of fallen man.

But the Gospel also reveals that in spite of his all too evident power, the Prince of this World is defeated. The liberating act accomplished by Jesus Christ is called to our attention again and again by the Gospel and drives us to repentance. It is this repentance which drives us today to go back to work and find the path of obedience in the midst of the conflicts of our day and to redefine the responsibilities borne by Christians toward their nation and toward all men.

- B. The attitude of Christians toward war is conditioned on the other hand by the way they understand the State. Whatever by its form, the State can never constitute for Christian thought a simple and theologically indifferent fact. The State's existence, the plurality of nations, and the oppositions between nations which follows therefrom must remain serious problems for those who believe in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, in the promise of the Kingdom of God, in reconciliation. The story of the Tower of Babel shows that Israel, in spite of its particularism, was already facing the same difficulties.

One must therefore avoid explaining too easily the existence of the State, national plurality and conflict between nations be some sort of wise plan of the Creator or some mysterious working of the God of Israel having for its



purpose the preservation and the eschatological triumph of the chosen people. On the other hand, one must also avoid considering them as is simply the consequences of sin, for this would mean expelling God from History and accepting either a rationalism of despair or an utopian and anarchic internationalism. In the face of these realities the Christian must show his intellectual modesty. He should not seek to explain the world, where the results of sin and the act of God are inextricably intertwined, but to live in the world with his neighbors in a way which is conformed to the Will of God, thanks to the "Earnest of the Spirit."

Still a few intellectual orientation points are indispensable to guide Christians' attitude towards the State and the nations. It is the idea of the Lordship of Christ which furnishes these. To say that "Christ is Lord" is not simply to affirm His resurrection and His return at the end of time; it is also to describe the present role of the Resurrected One in political terms. If it is not to be meaningless, this Confession of Faith must therefore signify:

- a) The sole religiously sanctioned authority is henceforth exercised by the Resurrected; all human authority is thereby radically desacralized, laicized, secularized.
- b) Until the final manifestation of the Lordship of Christ the nations "maintain" a political structure which, even though it has become completely secular, obtains its only legitimacy from the fact that the Lord of the world temporarily assigns it a place.

HRMV: Must we not fear here a sort of camouflaged historical determinism? What is the expression of the Lord's desire to maintain the world? Is it true that the existence of Libya, for example, as an autonomous state is legitimized by an assignment to it of a place in the world, or is it the effect of Russian strategy? One says, "God permits" and one tends to think "God authorizes" and then soon "God decrees". It seems to us that one would rather say that God tolerates, that God is patient, that God judges and will re-establish His order.

The existence of this organization can no longer have any other goal and justification than to permit the continuation of human history by the preservation of communities adapted to the conditions of each age. But this work of preservation has meaning for the Christian because it makes possible the preaching of the Gospel.

What shall be the attitude of Christians toward these states, divested of their supernatural halo but to which the Lord Jesus still gives the right to exist? Churches have so often preached to their faithful to be docile toward "the authorities", that it is fashionable today to do the opposite and to call Christians to vigilance with respect to authority, to the defense of "Divine Right" to "Prophetism". We must have the courage to say that this fad also has its dangers. Of course, the church must be a sentinel and exhort her believers to reservations with regard to the state (and even to certain forms of conscientious objection when necessary) when the state refuses to keep its vocation secular; i.e. when it places itself in the service of a God, whose worship it favors.



JL: Why always begin with this apriori according to which it is only when the state gets involved in religion, favoring one faith or persecuting another, that the Christian could be led to refuse to obey? What is the source of this apriori? What is its Scriptural basis? In whose name does one thereby exclude the possibility for a Christian to refuse to obey the order of a state simply because it is immoral? We are not able to discover the Scriptural foundation for this distinction, which is here formulated as an axiom, between the religious and the moral realms. Furthermore, the distinction between religion and morals is artificial and arbitrary. In organizing an army does the state not "place itself in the service of a God" (Mars) and does it not "favor his worship"? And when a Christian joins the army is he not placed "in the Service" of the paganism of Mars?

But the Church cannot deny the autonomy of the political. (Mark 12:13-17 puts in the same category those who wish to impose upon the State the Law of God and those who would give priority to submission to the authorities over obedience to God).

HRMV: The exegesis of Mark 12:13-17 is ambiguous. Jesus does not forbid his believers and the Church to apply the Law of God to the State. He only instructs them not to attempt to impose this law on an organism which has no personal character - - - no soul if you please - - - to enable it to accept or reject the law. This means that believers, the Church, can in no case avoid their personal responsibility before God with regard to political issues. Not possessing the liberty of a Child of God, the State lives under the sign of determination, of necessity. It is the duty of believers and of the Church to pull the State ceaselessly toward liberty, which is found in obedience to the Law of God. There can therefore be no "autonomy of the political", no "secular mission of the State". . . . Obviously in the face of "religion" - - - i.e. of the Church when she understands herself sociologically and not spiritually, according to her true nature - - - the State has the right to a certain secular character in dealing with liberties which are equally secular; it is good that the State should insist on this and that we should hold the State to it. But just as is the case for every other reality subject to the Law of God, it has no autonomy before Him.

JL: This formulation is completely equivocal. What is meant: the autonomy of the political as over against the religious (and the Church)? Or its autonomy over against God and the Lord Jesus Christ? The latter interpretation must be rejected because the entire Bible contradicts it. According to the former, the formulation is irrelevant to the basic problem. For even if the State enjoys legitimately a certain "autonomy" over against the Church, it is none the less not autonomous over against God and we still have our problem: does the Christian glorify God or does he deny Jesus Christ in serving in the army? - - - let us admit in any case that to justify any "autonomy", even that of the "political" within the framework of Christian theology is surprising. We prefer to believe in the sovereignty of God.

If this notorious text from Mark 13 had to be thus interpreted we would have to admit that Jesus was condemning in advance Luther and Calvin who both believed that the Law of God applied also to the political authorities. But this interpretation is not satisfying because it supposes that the saying "give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" is stating a general principle, a foundation stone for a politico-religious philosophy. But this was certainly not the case. . . . Furthermore: though we do admit that the attitude of "those who seek to impose the Law of God upon the State"



is to be challenged because it has a clericalist sound, we also believe with the Reformers that the Law of God nevertheless certainly concerns the State and that God definitely expects of the magistrate, who is called "Servant of God" according to Romans 13, that he respect and take seriously God's Will. And we believe just as surely that the Christian cannot submit genuinely to political authority without examining the orders it gives him in the line of this Law, so that the obedience of the Christian to the orders of the State is not faithful unless these orders do not oblige him to violate the Law of God. And speaking thus we believe ourselves to be faithful to the Message of the Reformers.

The Church must replace the good old appeals for submission and the over-simplified calls to revolt by a program of instruction intended to guide Christians along the difficult paths they must walk as mature citizens of a modern State.

What God asks of Christians is that they discern realistically what the State needs to fulfill its secular mission, and that they bring their personal contribution, also a completely secular contribution.

JL: If we understand properly we are being told that the essential and the primary approach of Christian political ethics resides in an estimation (human and provisional!) of the needs of the State. It seems to us that this is to install oneself from the very beginning in a natural theology, or rather a natural philosophy which excludes Scriptural Revelation. We believe on the contrary that a genuine Christian ethics, even with reverence to the political sector of the Christian's obedience, must begin with justification by faith founded upon the death and the resurrection of Christ and must seek out in His sanctification how the believer can and must incarnate in his concrete existence and his believing obedience, his gratitude for the salvation which he has received. The "realism" should come afterwards with the application and not at the beginning.

On the level of the natural philosophy where the above phrasing places us, it seems to us extremely difficult to believe that we could "discern" with assurance the so-called "needs" of the State. We have known too many excellent people who argued without hesitation that the State "needed" legalized prostitution, to fail to distrust the discernment of which Christians consider themselves capable in the face of political questions. Christians rarely escape the constraint of the prejudices of their environment and like everyone else they sometimes confuse a hypothesis with a truth. We therefore believe that the ethical problem of the political obedience of the Christian should begin with the solid Biblical study of the Apostle's affirmation: "the magistrate is a Servant of God for thy good" (Romans 13:4). Only when we will have received through Scripture a clear vision of what God expects of political authority, and of the limits which God fixes for the Christian's obedience to this authority that we can be ready to turn to concrete application.

In other terms: the Christian should conscientiously acquaint himself with politics and play his own role as a non-Christian would do. It is obvious that this attitude though it is preferable to the avoidance of the problem by abstention or servility, will involve him in numerous difficulties. Therefore the Church must explain clearly to her members the duties imposed upon them by their solidarity with the national community, give them the taste for a life of free men, men responsible to defend justice and liberty in the framework of public institutions.



## II. The Ethical Problem

Called first of all to love, then to participate in politics, the Christian finds himself in a delicate moral situation. The state defends order and justice by the use of constraint. As a citizen the Christian accepts that the collectivity should use in his name means which he could not accept in his personal life; if he is a functionary he resorts to these means if he thinks them necessary or if he is ordered to do so. The Christian life is therefore torn between two ethical obligations, the co-existence of which is just as scandalous for his conscience as that of the Lordship of Christ with human States.

The conflict between the morality of love and that of justice is most often hidden. The Christian is on the one hand somewhat lukewarm in loving his brethren and his enemies, whereas the State defends order and justice with a certain indulgence. The one practices a little more than the Decalog; the other a little less. The difference is not too visible to most people. But a political or economical crisis is sufficient to reopen the gap so that many Christians, if not all, are placed before choices which will be painful if they take seriously their calling as disciples. It is in such circumstances that their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who commands them to love, but at the same time maintains a provisional political order where constraint is king and from which they cannot withdraw, is tested. This faith will prove its solidity if it leads not to a common decision of all Christians - - - doubtless inconceivable - - - but to personal obedience and to a renewed prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

In case of war the opposition between the commands of love and those of the political order will be exceptionally striking. At such a moment the State demands of the citizen murder or complicity therein, which are evidently incompatible with the love commandment, all that may have been affirmed to the contrary notwithstanding. Furthermore the State provokes a patriotic exaltation which approaches idolatry in order to obtain from her soldiers the sacrifice of their lives. The entire process is suspicious and scandalous to those Christians who perceive the most clearly the "New Commandment". This explains the presence among Christians of all ages of conscientious objectors courageous enough to face every risk and refuse to associate themselves with this criminal undertaking. The testimony thus rendered to Jesus Christ has not always been irreproachable, but we must recognize in it one of the most authentic cries of the Christian conscience. This cry must be heard by all those who have not yet understood what an intolerable scandal war represents in a world of which Jesus Christ is the Lord. It is more genuine than all the "Christian" apologies for the resort to force which seek to find Scriptural foundations for the law of the jungle. It makes ridiculous the adventurous interpretations which draw from a passage like Romans 13, dealing with the police power of the world state, a justification for war.

Nevertheless the testimony borne by conscientious objectors generally remained instinctive and it was often not sufficiently perceived how radical it really was. It could be argued that the refusal to participate in war does not take on the significance of an absolute submission to Divine Law unless it is accompanied by the rejection of all violence - - - i.e. of every State institution.

JL: This way of speaking reveals that the writers are considering what they call conscientious objection as if it were a philosophical and legalistic position (refusing "violence", concerned to apply without any exception a rule of virtue). This seems to us to be unjust to Christian conscientious objectors who seek to avoid not violence but a denial of Jesus Christ. Furthermore most objectors admit that recourse to violence on the part of the



State is legitimate as long as this violence does not become destructive and murderous. The above syllogism, which tells the objectors they must object the State itself to be logical, is therefore not convincing. Personally we believe that a certain forceful constraint is indispensable to the State and contributes to the maintenance of peace and order as long as it does not go beyond the limits set by God, particularly in the Decalog. If it does go beyond these limits the constraint of the State, having become murderous, aggravates disorder and injustice and tends to destroy the society it claims to protect. The objector who refuses to participate in generalized massacre can therefore not be accused of withdrawing from his duty to be submissive to the authorities; for on the contrary, his refusal to kill appeals to the responsible authority of his nation to abandon an undertaking which is criminal, senseless, and destructive, inviting them to return to the Plan of God and to remain within the limits which God has placed for the civil authority, seeking other means to resolve the conflict.

At the very least conscientious objection, if it is to be more than a political option, must reject all participation in any war. However, there are cases in which a State could not renounce war without committing suicide, which would rob the society of which it is the framework of every chance of survival.

JL: This phrase is paradoxical. A nation also chooses suicide when it resorts to war - - and even in one sense when it prepares for war in a way which ruins it economically and demoralizes it. But more significantly the sentence is based upon a hypothesis which, though almost universally accepted, nevertheless is not necessarily true: namely that there is no other means than the army to protect the existence and the independence of a given society. Is this not to postulate in advance that there can be only a negative answer to the most urgent problem of our time, that of organizing the defense of nations on another basis and by use of other means, because of the terrible destructive power of modern arms? Is it not in this direction that Christians should seek and give an example? In any case we contest the postulate according to which it is impossible to defend a nation by other than military means. And we reject every theology which accepts this postulate without discussion.

The conscientious objector thereby involves himself in a sequence of events which may cost innumerable human lives and sacrifice far into the future previous culture values.

JL: Here we have a typically emotional sentence. Upon reflection it appears truly difficult to claim that he who refuses to participate in organized killing causes more deaths than he who participates; the more people the latter helps to kill, the more he provokes the vengeance and reprisal of the enemy, the more of his own fellow country men he thereby causes to be killed. As far as the "precious cultural values" are concerned, everyone knows that they disappear when one defends them with arms; it sometimes happens that after having struggled, using arms, against an enemy whom one considers "barbarian", one becomes aware a few years later of having become oneself as barbarous as he. For example, Algeria.

We return to the phrase, "the conscientious objector involves himself in a sequence of events. . . . . "the objector does not involve himself in any sequence of events. He refuses to involve himself in a series of events because he believes it incompatible with his faith. He would certainly participate in the defense of his nation by his own methods (non-violence, etc.), if one did not stupidly put him in prison. To accuse him of getting himself involve



in any sort of action precisely when he is put in prison and reduced to inactivity seems to be a strange kind of humor.

HRMV: It should be noted at least that war, especially modern war, leaves no chance of survival to society. It disintegrates a society both spiritually and physically. In deciding to wage nuclear war one forbids to the society in question the possibility of moving toward a greater confidence in the force which - - - at least according to Christian belief - - - is of the spirit and should show itself in a very resistant non-violence. Looking at the Cross and the Resurrection Christians should ask if it is conceivable that a society would be able to survive by being protected against the Christian path of suffering. They must further ask if it is fitting to sacrifice their fidelity to the Lord for the "survival" of a society which is sure to die in any case.

Under such circumstances he is no less guilty than a soldier. Like the latter he violates one Divine Commandment in order to obey another.

HRMV: Truly a strange thing that it should not be noticed how the same argument applies at least as validly to a Christian who abandons his first loyalty to become a soldier! When a Christian agrees to war, nuclear or otherwise, does he not precisely involve himself in a sequence of events which endanger innumerable human lives and which sacrifices - - - in this case with his consent - - - precious cultural values?

JL: We concede willingly that the objector is just as guilty as the soldier. We fail to see what interest one can have in evaluating the degree of sinfulness of people. Let us leave to God what is His responsibility. The only genuine problem is to find by what form of obedience we can express our faith in Jesus Christ.

What is this "Divine Commandment" which the objector violates? We would make progress if it were formulated explicitly and clearly. In any case we have not found either in the Decalog or in the New Testament the words: "Thou shalt defend thy country by force of arms." But this is what is in question. We are not discussing the ends but the means. The objector does not refuse to contribute to the defense of his country, he refuses only to participate to a certain way of "defending". This is why the accusation that he is violating a "Divine Command" is inadequate. He cannot be reproached for failing to protect his neighbor (his fellow countrymen) if it can be proved that the military means truly provides this protection and is the only protection it can provide it. Until this double proof has been furnished (and who could furnish it?) we must ask if the halo placed on the resort to war is not simply an ancestral atavism and if what the objector violates is not a pagan command.

Christian thought has often sought to escape this dilemma by distinguishing between "just wars" in which every Christian should conscientiously participate and "unjust wars" in which he should refuse to help. These two ideas are more alive than ever in the public opinion of the whole world in a secularized form. One has only to think of all the institutions founded since the beginning of the century to protect international morality. What has been done should not be minimized. But this is something quite different from ethical standards enabling Christians to make the moral choice to which God calls them. To speak for or against the "justness" of a war is to state a political or legal judgment. This is no less the case if this judgment is stated by Christians or a Church. Such judgments are the basis of political options and action. Is it possible for Christians to base their choice for or against participation in war on such a shifting formulation? We do better to recognize that the dynamic of conscientious objection - - - its passion for



obedience to the Will of God - - - is broken as soon as one attempts to establish casuistics for war. Furthermore in making the "justness" of a war into an ethical criterion one is bringing the "just war" dangerously near to the "Holy War". Every one knows that no one is more brutal than a Crusader. It is therefore good that the certainty of a soldier combating for the cause of justice should remain relative, limited, secular.

Every war states the ethical problem of conflicting values in the same terms, even if the problem of the Christian's political attitude may change from case to case. You are guilty before God whatever you do - - - will you be objector of soldier? There is at least one attitude which is in all cases unacceptable, which our church must renounce in the Name of the Gospel. That would be to avoid constantly the Demands of God, disinteresting oneself in public affairs in time of peace and accepting the uniform with resignation when war breaks out.

The clearest solution would be to prefer in all circumstances a complete faithfulness to the Love Commandment such as is demanded by constant conscientious objection. But does not such an attitude involve ceasing to "render to Caesar" what continues to be due him?

JL: Once again we must object to the misuse of the Words of Christ which make them say what they do not say. Caesar was a foreign tyrant, a hated foreign occupant; it is doubtful that Jesus could have intended to recommend to His compatriots that they serve in the Roman army, since He did not in fact even positively recommend the payment of the tax demanded by Caesar. Still the question remains valid, does not the objector's refusal separate him from his duty of solidarity with the community of which he is a member? Does it not deprive the government of assistance which it had a right to count on?

We have already answered this objection. Here we need add only that the first duty of the Christian is to be a genuine Christian just as the first duty of the Church is to be the Church and not something else. The Christian who consents to conform to a collective action which involves for him that he separates himself from Jesus Christ and denies Him by his deeds is serving neither his Lord nor the State. If the salt loses its savor it is no longer good except to be trampled on. What the State needs the most is the testimony of consistent Christians who place obedience to God before every other consideration.

How can we escape from this dilemma? We believe that it is up to the State if it desires the collaboration of the Christians to seek means and methods which are acceptable for them. For the State is, within its proper function, a "servant" of the same God of whom the Christians are also "servants". Christians should not help the State to mock God by a sort of conformity which contradicts their believing obedience. On the contrary, they serve their nation and their government if they remain what they are: Christians.

Does not conscientious objection lead, whatever one says, to political abstention and perhaps even to a refusal to encounter the world, a refusal which contradicts the Christian's vocation?

HRMV: Conscientious objection does not lead to political abstention. No advocate of this position has abandoned his responsibility - - - we cite Tolstoy, Ragaz, Ceresole, Niemöller. What they do is to approach the political realm from another side than that of its ordinary pagan implications. The public authorities who prosecute the objectors know this full well; they would gladly abandon them to their harmless folly if they considered the position of the



objectors to be without danger for the established pseudo order - - - the order of lies in the midst of which it blossoms.

JL: Did Jesus "abstain": did He "refuse to encounter the world" when He refused himself to be made king by the crowd (John 6:15)? Did Paul disinterest himself from his people when he broke with traditional Phariseeism to enter the service of Christ? We must not confuse conformity with abstention. The objectors whom we know can hardly be accused of abstentionism or of refusing to encounter the world. It would seem on the contrary that it is precisely by their conformity that Christians accustom themselves to an abstention which approaches resignation, thereby refusing of genuine encounter with the world. To encounter someone else implies a dialog and not playing chameleon with him. For a Christian to "encounter" a drunkard or a prostitute does not mean participating in what they are doing. And if you are tempted to respond: "For me the fatherland is not 'someone else'!" be careful exactly just where you are placing yourself! Listen rather to the Apostle Paul remind us what is the true "Christian vocation": "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your understanding, that you may discern what is the Will of God, which is good, acceptable (to God) and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

The menacing prospective of war should rather constrain Christians to take seriously their task as citizens, reminding them that what they do today prepares or avoids for the morrow the tensions which cause armed conflict. Rejecting both the temptation of absolute purity and that of conformist resignation, Christians must choose a more complex and more difficult behavior: always active citizens, soldiers if it must be so. . . .but sometimes objectors when a situation is too crystallized, so that political experience and action through more normal channels are no longer useful.

We do not claim to have solved the problem of double standards by these remarks. But is the problem soluble otherwise then by the Kingdom of God, of which we have only the first fruits? And if one fears that by involving themselves in this pathway Christians of differing nationalities and political loyalties will more easily entrench themselves in their divisions, we respond that Christian unity remains always a miracle: the miracle of an impossible community which is built by accepting one another, being bound together by Christ in spite of whatever can oppose us one to another.

## II. The Present Situation

The sections, I and II, of the present report intentionally avoided raising the traditional conceptions of war in order to formulate more clearly basic and theological questions. . . .but the scientific, technical, political, and social revolutions of recent years are a challenge for the Church and forbid her to repeat the answers which were formulated at the time of Augustine or Luther. The same "political preaching" which was proper yesterday can today travesty the Gospel by failing to take account of the profound changes brought about in our time for the State and for war.

A. War is changing radically its nature. The purely quantitative changes in the means of destruction can create a qualitative new situation: the possibility of destroying all humanity, its physical existence and its power of reproduction.

This new possibility calls into question the traditional and modern conceptions of the just "wars" in these conceptions were introduced into Christian ethics to limit its arbitrariness rather than to justify any warfare, and they were possible because war could be compared to the police function. As long as it permitted the safe-



guarding of the community and the survival of it's culture, it's justice, and it's values - - - i.e. as long as it was not "total" - - - war could be considered as a punitive expedition commanded by a magistrate. But the war which threatens us today has caused the threshold beyond which the safeguarding of the community seems no longer possible. . . . .

A certain number of other limits patiently acquired an international law are in the process of becoming irrelevant. This is the case for the distinction between combatants and noncombatants.

B. At the very moment when the criteria of the "just war" have disappeared, most of the limited wars of recent years claim to be "police operations". To merit this name such operations must respect the rule which forbids the police to use criminal methods in the service of justice. Of course, it is necessary to adapt one's method to the actions of the adversary. But in presenting the adversary as a criminal the "police operation" conception risks giving credit to the idea that it is legitimate to use any and all means. The "police" consider themselves released from all responsibility and every effort to find a political solution for the conflict the suspect of treason. In addition, public opinion, confused by insoluble problems lying behind conflicts which appear minor, is ready to accept without discrimination any methods likely to put a rapid end to the irritation. . . . .

C. In many parts of the world the nation is no longer the basic fact. Vital problems must be faced on a world-wide scale. It may be true, but it is no longer evident that the political responsibility of the Christian should be expressed first of all on the national level. . . . . It is perhaps still true but it is no longer evident that a sovereign State has the right to declare war when it is a victim of a serious injustice or of a threat which it feels unable to counter otherwise. Over against its rights and its chances of success it must place the risk of world war and the reactions - - - well-founded or not - - - of world public opinion.

#### IV. The Role of the Churches

It is self-evident that churches are not called to "prevent war" by direct participation in politics. . . . . Christians should involve themselves as individuals, as respective citizens and in complete liberty. But in encouraging Christians to do this the churches are doing only a part of their task. In today's troubled and complex world they owe their members a constant aid, a "political cure of souls" taking account both of the major affirmations of the Gospel and of international reality. . . . .

A. The Church should preach without ceasing that by His passion and His resurrection Christ has laid in the midst of the old world the foundation of the new and that His disciples are called to raise up within history visible signs of this reconciliation.

B. The Church should not fail to address herself directly to political authorities to remind them out of the courage which it requires that recourse to fear is always abnormal. But in so doing she should avoid two errors: an excessive quantity of public declarations; and setting herself up as an expert but called to furnish ingenious political recipes for every troubling situation.

C. The most urgent task of the Church if it desires to contribute to the prevention of war is to formulate a kind of "political preaching" . . . This means mutual aid in seeking who is in our days the Caesar to whom Christians should give what he needs to safeguard human community; and what are the means which Caesar can use as defense against external menaces without bringing about the ruin of all humanity.



This search can doubtlessly not attain complete agreement. But the contemporary confusion of Christian thought on these questions is so great that one could hope at least to clarify certain points and to restore "political preaching" to some of the relevance which it has lost. For example the political responsibility of the Christian, now ceasing to exist within the nation, is now accompanied by a supra-national responsibility whose norms must not remain much longer as unclear as they are today; similarly whereas certain forms of war may continue to appear legitimate ("limited" or "revolutionary" wars), there is perhaps a form of "total war" which Christians should refuse to prepare for and to wage because it is incapable of being controlled and can have no other result than the destruction of all humanity.

D. Such a "political preaching" should be supplemented by the propagation of competent documentation on contemporary problems. . . . This information service should be entrusted to an ecumenical organization enjoying a degree of autonomy from the World Council of Churches and the individual churches. . . .

HRMV: Concerning sections III and IV, little comment is called for . . . . The sole reservation is that the composition of such commissions gives to their results a cautious character necessary to maintain their unity. . . . Such documents are thereby of a type which is more political rather than what we should call prophetic, giving better explanation to this absolute something which is God's share. As such the document seems to achieve as much as possible. . . . It is a beginning because this text opens the doors for a refusal of principle in the case of nuclear war.

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Social, August, 1958, and Cahiers de la Reconcilia-  
tion, January, 1959.  
Chairman of the Commission was Prof. Etienne  
Trocme of Strasbourg.

#### Statement of the Theological Commission of the Swiss Evangelical Church Federation

- I. We, the undersigned members of the Theological Commission of the Swiss Evangelical Church Federation understand the question which has been directed to our commission to be asking: whether the possibility of atomic war --- in general and especially when seen as a means of national defense for Switzerland --- is to be accepted or rejected on Christian grounds, i.e. in obedience toward the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We reject it for the following reasons:
1. Even in view of the previously used forms of combat the possibility of war as an ultimate means of resolving political problems between nations and the States could only be accepted under serious limitations and reservations. Christianity cannot consider itself obligated to take the same attitude toward every newly discovered form of combat.
  2. War in the form of atomic war means the mutual radical elimination of those who participate and even beyond them (already during its preparation) a most serious threat against coming generations, in fact against all creaturely life --- and this with the misuse of nature and all her forces in the worst conceivable way.
  3. War in this form is seen to be a means which no end can justify, which is inappropriate for resolving political conflicts because it denies its own pre-suppositions. The question of the Christian attitude toward war as such thereby enters a new phase.



4. Prior to a final result in the search for a new Christian attitude toward war as such, and independently of such results, this much is already clear today: that atomic war can only be waged and prepared by openly denying the Will of the Lord who is faithful to His creation and gracious to Man.
5. To defend Switzerland with atomic war would be a contradiction in terms. To succumb to such an adventure we (note that we are the first minor nation to have raised the question) are challenged by no concrete necessity and no sober prospect of success. It could not fail to mean either a most terrible threat to our foreign neighbors or the abandon of countless Swiss citizens in present and future. It would in any case mean that we would lose both our neutrality and our particular historical mission, and thereby every grounds for existence as a nation.
6. Planning to defend the nation with atomic warfare means in reality planning for the most dangerous possible menace to the nation, a plan which no speculation about the menace of the East can excuse.
7. This also applies to the distinction "tactical" and "strategic" atomic weapons. He who today approves of "small" atomic bombs must also approve of "large" ones tomorrow with the same arguments and hold them as well to be "absolutely necessary" for the Swiss army.
8. Neither on the level of public opinion nor among political and military experts and responsible persons has the discussion of the desirability (or the feasibility) of atomic armaments been adequate. If Christianity as made visible in the Church is to speak to this issue --- and she must --- what she has to throw in the balance can only be an unequivocal and unconditional testimony that any active participation in atomic warfare or its preparation is excluded by obedience toward the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Signed: K. Barth  
 J. Courvoisier  
 E. Grin  
 J. J. Stamm

II. The undersigned members of the Theological Commission of the Swiss Evangelical Church Federation take the following position concerning the question raised before the commission:

1. The weapons of the military trade have always been terrible. Their use has always meant sin and guilt, a dishonoring of God's creation. War has always meant a scourge for a civilian population; particularly during both World Wars the distinction between the front and the Hinterland have become largely illusory. This however should not cause us to fail to see that atomic weapons have brought an unheard-of heightening of these factors, which raises new problems. Not only is the distinction between military and nonmilitary targets, which was already questionable in the case of conventional bombing, still more questionable; above all the indirect effects of radiation have results which reach far beyond the generation which experiences a war and could make the annihilation of all organic life on earth a serious possibility. Both of these facts are new and demand renewed theological analysis.
2. The most pressing concern of the Christian Church must be, also in this situation, to testify in word and deed to the Kingdom of God for which she waits. The churches of Switzerland are thereby challenged with the greatest urgency to join the struggle for a new awakening through the Spirit of God, so that the churches



awake out of their harmlessness and indifference.

3. Since God has also placed his Church within the realms of the People and the State, she also bears a responsibility for them. She must therefore do everything which lies within her power to assist in the combat for peace among nations. She must do this realistically in view of assisting possibilities. The right way to do this can only be found in reasonable political decisions in the face of the given situation. The Word of God provides no generally valid law for this purpose. While the listening to God's Word we see today's situation as follows:
4. National defense is still desirable in spite of all the relativity which applies to the Swiss State as well as to others. This of course presupposes that we mean not solely a selfish and nationalistic self-affirmation, but that Switzerland must not forget her mission and her obligations toward other nations and that she should pursue a policy of political solidarity with all nations which sincerely seek for a peace grounded upon justice.
5. Whether nuclear weapons can be used and are necessary for this defense without the loss of the traditional character of Swiss defensive strategy is not yet clear. This must be examined in caution and soberly and from all points of view. An a-priori No of principle covering a not yet fully understood situation in coming years is not possible. We must keep in mind that the "equilibrium of armament" is no more a permanent solution than an "atomic pacifism". Every effort must therefore be concentrated on a constructive safe-guarding of the peace.
6. We recognize the serious and sincere desire to serve the welfare of Switzerland and the preservation of the world from the danger of atomic war also among those who drew from the world different conclusions that differ from ours. We hope that the differing conceptions will call forth no hateful divisions in our Church and our people.

Signed: Ph. Daulte  
K. Guggisberg  
V. Maag  
Ph. Menoud  
E. Schweizer  
E. Staehelin

(Professor Schweizer modified his signature with an additional comment urging extreme caution lest Switzerland contribute to a heightening of armament competition and lose her traditional neutrality.)

#### VIII. East Germany: Barth's "Letter"

(Karl Barth's Letter to a Pastor in the D.D.R. has received considerable attention, largely on the basis of inadequate and even inaccurate reporting by the secular press. A major portion of the introductory section of this pamphlet has appeared in The Christian Century; we offer here a translation of the questions and answers which make up approximately the last third of the text. This material is reproduced with the consent of the Evangelischer Verlag.)

1. Can it be evaluated only as disobedience to the Gospel if a longing for reunification of Germany in welfare and freedom of the occidental type nags at one in a hidden chamber of the heart?



Answer: Such a longing is truly understandable and certainly not without foundation. I think that I would feel this same longing deeply if I were in your place. Life in the West has doubtless many advantages, some of them certainly genuine. No one will attempt to deny that life in the East has its notorious disadvantages --- if only because of somethings which happen at the border. But what matters is what place you give this longing in relationship to your obedience toward the Gospel. The two can hardly be identical. Or have you ever met a Christian who gave you the impression that his obedience to the Gospel drove him to nourish in himself this longing? But if you distinguish between its voice and that of the Gospel, then you will in all cases be obedient to that of the Gospel if you let that other voice have second, third, or fourth place in the ordering of your thinking, desiring and acting. Not to have this longing but to give it primacy over against your commitment to the Gospel is what would have to be "evaluated only as disobedience".

2. Is it possible to give to the state in the German Democratic Republic the declaration of loyalty for which it asks in the face of such a regime's inherent dangers?

Answer: I do not know how this declaration of loyalty is worded but I assume that he who makes such a declaration does not buy a pig in a poke as was the case with the Hitler Oath ("I swear to be faithful and obedient to the f hrer. . . ."), but that the declaration which is requested defines the existing political order based upon the Constitution of the German Democratic Republic. "Loyalty" toward this order means (here I have in mind Romans 13, but also my own relationship to the Swiss Confederation as its order is defined in this Constitution) a sincere willingness to accept its existence and to fit in - - - perhaps under certain conditions, but at the same time to suppress certain possible objections (concerning the "inherent dangers"). "Loyalty" does not mean approval of the ideology which is at the base of this political order. "Loyalty" does not mean approval of every measure taken by the actual bearers of authority and representatives of this political order. "Loyalty" includes the reservation of one's freedom of thought over against the ideology as well as the further reservation of possible contradiction or even resistance against certain applications and exercises of this order. There is such a thing as a "loyal opposition". He is "loyal" to a given state who accepts this state's validity and authority for himself and is determined to conform to it within the limits of what is innerly and externally possible for him. In your place I would see no difficulty in offering to the D.D.R. loyalty in this sense and therefore in performing in conformity to truth the declaration which is asked of you.

3. One of our theology teachers once claimed that the pietists ("Stillen im Lande") had prayed the Third Reich away. Should such a prayer be allowed in the contemporary situation?

Answer: This report is hard for me to accept because in 1933 some at least of the "Stillen im Lande". . . . were quite involved in the coming of the Third Reich. Whether you can and should participate in a "praying-away" of the D.D.R. depends on whether you can seriously take the responsibility for coming to God with such a request. Do you not fear that it might be heard and granted in that one fine morning you would wake up among the "fleshpots of Egypt" committed to the American way of life? Would you not find it more fruitful to pray for rather than against the D.D.R. and for light and strength for proper Christian existence and action precisely within the D.D.R.?

(This passage has been given the most attention in the journalistic reporting of Barth's statement. The reporters have however not gone to the trouble to indicate that in this section Barth was not himself responsible for the reference to the "fleshpots of Egypt". The letter written to Barth from Eastern Germany had already stated that the writer feared "nothing less than to be liberated a-la Adenauer



and led back to the fleshpots of Egypt". It is striking that the phrase of Barth's which seems to many to have been the most offensive was not his own.

4. In how far can it be grounds for resistance when the State constantly circumscribes the Church's claim to a public hearing, in consideration of the fact that most anti-Communist propaganda centers its attack at this point?

Answer: The conception "Church's claim to the public hearing" is in itself problematical. The only real and genuine claim to a public hearing is that which God himself can make for His Word. The Church has no "claim" to a right to a public hearing for her word. The "claim" of God's Word is that it demands to be served faithfully, exactly, and unassumingly by her word. Her word can only receive a public hearing is so far as God wishes to grant it to her in unmerited grace. The "circumscribing" of the public claims of the Church may therefore be understood as a sign of God's love working through the instrumentality of the socialistic State against its own intention - - - which it would therefore not be advisable to resist. "The anti-Communitistic propaganda" is theologically in bad shape if it chooses precisely this point on which to center its attack.

5. The tension of the situation works on one's nerves.....Such tensions lead literally to conflicts which can hardly be resolved. Can we afford to run a "breaking-point test" by dealing with these questions, even though they are urgent? In times of oppression is it not desirable to attribute greater importance to tactical considerations of maintaining spiritual unity than to getting across one's own better understanding of the truth?

Answer: The question shakes me deeply because it speaks so clearly to someone who is involved only from a distance of how you are personally and humanly involved... What can one say that will be useful in answer to such a question?....If anything then perhaps I should speak to the alternatives which you raise in the question itself: whether in the face of the "breaking-point test" which arises in the discussion of the problems we are dealing with one would prefer "tactical consideration for the spiritual unity of the brethren" or the insistence upon one's own understanding? You seem to prefer the former possibility. My impression is that the alternatives are not in order. If Christians, pastors, and theologians are disunited then neither "insisting on one's own better understanding" nor "inner-unity" can have more than secondary importance, however serious both may be. The real alternative is whether in the face of these questions we all are ready to begin again together with the A B C of what makes Christians christian (without consideration either of the "better understanding" of one individual or of "the unity of understanding" which is to be maintained or to be sought, but rather in the greatest possible openness), i.e. to begin once again with what concerns us all and commits us all, to return to the testimony to the Word of God which has been given to us, to give ourselves an accounting of what the Gospel of His free grace means and might have to say to us and our churches here and now - - - or should we have any reason not to want to do this? For example, are we ready to let Jeremiah 29 (alluded to in an earlier part of the text) speak to us in complete openness - - - or can we not ask this much of ourselves? Then you may face (first of all each in his own study but then again in meetings) the "breaking-point test"! There might be some breakage but it might also be that in the process "one's own better understanding", which however did not merit being insisted on will be abandoned. It might also be that something one thought was "unity" which however was deceptive or could only have been acquired through deception, must be lost. But what is certain is that here and there, there can come a new and useable better understanding and a new and genuine unity and the prospect is sure - - - I think I can truly predict it without being a psychiatrist - - - that these breaking-point tests, whatever their first result might be, will calm everyone's nerves and work in a healthful way against the



menace of breakdown which you all face. But what am I saying? "The Word, the Word must do it"---all along the line. But the Word will do it.

6. Does the Church not involuntarily have a duty of self-defense, in order that we do not completely lose possession of a sphere in which we can preach unhindered? Does not the appeal of the "peace preachers", that we must "follow through with the offensive of the love of Christ against the world" ultimately serve the interests of those who wish to take away our freedom to preach?

Answer: After what I said before you will certainly be able to guess what I will answer here. I can no more believe in "self-defense" as commanded or ever as permitted for the Church than I believe in a "claim to a public hearing", as one of her rights. "A sphere in which we can preach unhindered" is something which we can hope to receive from the State and from society, and if we receive it we may make use of it with gratitude. But the Church has no right to such a sphere and to insist on such a right would be senseless. Does the Church not have her hands full already with another question: namely, whether what she intends to preach in the sphere --- large, small, or still smaller --- which she has been assigned is truly the good news of the Kingdom of God? Are her hands not full already with the prayer and the work to the end that this proclamation might become ever stronger, ever more joyful, ever more unambiguous? Do you not agree that this message, in so far as we are truly its messengers in East and West - - -which however may not be simply presupposed in either East or West - - - has the power, when our old "spheres" are taken away or narrowed, to create new "spheres" whose existence one day may surprise the oppressor. Without losing time in measures to defend the old spheres let us concentrate on Him whose light will burn the longer, if we do our part. I do not know the "peace preachers" you allude to; their appeal does sound a little sentimental in my ears. Perhaps some of them mean well or at least not evil; perhaps others are real collaborators. My counsel is that you orient yourself neither for nor against them but rather set your face "strongly toward Jerusalem", which is what I recommended with regard to the German Christians of another day.

7. Is it not frivolous daring, hasty experimentation to dismantle the "condemned facade" of the Church faster than the circumstances demand? Or has the hour struck for a fundamental reconstruction of the Church? Is there a criterion with which to measure the decisiveness of the hour?

Answer: The hour for fundamental reconstruction of the Church has probably not yet struck, since you are able to ask - - - more or less academically - - - by what criterion you would recognize it. And who can say that in the "dismantling and rebuilding" of which we speak there should ever be one particular "hour"? This reconstruction could even - - - this in fact seems to be the rule in the history of human possibilities and achievements - - - become a reality through a lengthy series of liberations from particular bondages and of individually perceptible opportunities and imperatives for creativeness. In your place, I would look at such individual opportunities, not asking whether they were "decisive" according to some sort of criterion, but rather expecting them to provide the necessity and the liberty for the decision which is immediately demanded. I would "watch" i.e. hold myself ready for such immediately necessary decisions, something which of course cannot be done without also praying - - - and thereby would not be watching for what the "circumstances" call for but rather for the Divine imperatives within these or other "circumstances". There would thus be no danger of "frivolous daring, hasty experimentation". . . . Without intending to press or oppress you I would remind you that Christianity has in all ages been very ready for far reaching, even "eschatological" considerations, but at the same time very unready for daring ventures in the particular and the concrete; unready because sleepy and anxious.



Christianity has thereby missed many of the decisive moments in which not everything but something could have and should have happened. Might it not be that it is your privilege in East Germany to show us the way also in this respect, not with spectacular but with small and thereby definite steps in the direction of the needed dismantling and reconstruction? This is only a question, but it is a question.

8. Pastors who flee from the Republic are generally removed from the pastorate by (Church authorities). Does not this exercise of judicial authority contradict the essence of the Church whose privilege it is to be qualitatively different from the State in the means which she uses? Is the exercise of disciplinary authority in this situation a legitimate expression of Church discipline?

Answer: "To flee from the Republic" would mean for a pastor practically that he forsakes his congregation which presumably cannot accompany him in his flight. There may be cases in which this is humanly understandable and in this sense excusable, but even in such cases such behavior is the equivalent of the man's removing himself from his office. What is the meaning of "the exercising of disciplinary authority" on the part of the Church administration other than the confirmation of the fact that the person concerned has already left the service of his congregation? It is certainly true that it is the privilege of the Church to be different from the State in the choice of here means of action. But I do not see how this could prevent her from drawing the appropriate conclusions, mildly but firmly, from factual situations which are not of her own making. He who leaves the D.D.R., which means practically leaving his congregation - - - whatever his reasons may be - - - certainly can make no claim before God or before men to remain in full possession of the status of a pastor and the appurtenant rights. Whether the status and the rights can be restored to him elsewhere for definite reasons is another question which I do not intend to discuss. . . . My friend, the Roman Catholic Dean of the city of Cologne once told me how in the spring of 1945 as the Americans approached he strictly forbade all his clergy to join the flight toward the East, and how he then went out to meet the advancing enemy at the head of a procession of his priests. Another memory: until recently we had in Basel a long series of East German theology students who studied with me zealously and competently and utilized their time in the West in a very sensible and reasonable way. I still hope that the barrier which then was raised may one day again be opened to permit once again travel to Basel . . . Without exception these young men said expressly and spontaneously that they were returning glad to the East Zone because they knew that their responsibilities were there. It might well be that I am not aware of many conditions and circumstances and can therefore not judge adequately. But provisionally I must still say that what happened that time in Cologne, like this unhesitating return of my students to the East Zone, seems to me more correct theologically and Christianly than the withdrawal of individual Protestant pastors of whom you speak; it therefore seems to me provisionally impossible to criticize the action of your Church administrators in this matter.

Before I close may I say a word on behalf of the West German Bruderschaften to whose inadequate understanding of your situation and problems you made passing reference. It may well be that the brethren in the West are too little concerned with you and what is happening around you. But you should see that this might hang together with what I said earlier in commenting on I Peter 5:9. The West German Bruderschaften stand in constant controversy with the principalities and powers, the spirits and demons of the land of the "economic miracle" with its thoughtless adhesion to NATO, its remilitarization, its chaplaincy contract, its atomic armament, its panicky fear of Russia, its crude mentality, its former Nazis: - - - with everything unwholesome which "Bonn" and C.D.U. mean particularly and personally and, not the least important, for the Evangelical Church. It should not be the case but I fear that it is: they simply have no energy left to share in addition in a more effective way in your problems.



They are expressing their solidarity with you in that they face their adversary as well as they can in their place, where he appears in a form so different from what you encounter. This should assure you that they will not simply forget you and you must have this confidence in them when you feel that they are not sharing sufficient your burden. You for your part should not forget the West German Bruderschaften in their combat which likewise is truly not an easy one.

#### IX. Peter Brunner

A significant article entitled "The Christian in a Responsible Society" by the German Theologian, Peter Brunner, appeared in The Lutheran World, publication of the Lutheran World Federation, Volume V, No. 3 for December 1958. Time did not permit our requesting authorization to reproduce an extensive portion of this text but the following extracts may give an impression of the significance and the general emphasis of the article.

For the sake of the preservation of mankind until the Last Day, it is the will of the triune God that there by, also after the incarnation, power invested in the state, prescriptions set up by human reason, and law established by man.....

Thus the Christian professes that the governing power of the state has been placed in man's midst by God himself so that man will preserve his historical existence and not give rein to savage violence. In the moment in which the governed are offered the opportunity to have a responsible part in the shaping of the governing power, the Christian cannot evade this responsibility. The Christian also approves the idea that the governing power of the state and the power of the sword belong together. The states should use the sword against evil, i.e., to put it concretely and ver pointedly, against the criminal. Such use of the power of the sword does not conflict with the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill.".....

In no case must the governing authorities make absolute or arbitrary use of the power of the sword. Its use is governed by a concrete norm established by God himself. Governing authority may use the sword against wrongdoers, for the benefit of those who do right, only when it is a case of fending off evil which is imperiling life, only when it is acting as a protecting barrier against attacks upon the ordered association of men with one another in a concrete community, only when it is acting to protect citizens against wolves that would break in - - - in other words, only when it acts on the basis of an elementary but fundamental distinction between good and evil.

At the present time these considerations make the attitude of the Christian to the possibility of war an especially difficult problem. A World War III fought with hydrogen bombs is no longer a protection and barrier against the evil threatening the historical existence of mankind. Such a war would much rather place the historical existence of mankind in extreme peril. For most of the nations fighting such a war it would very probably mean the end of their historical existence.

The ethical problematics involved in the construction of hydrogen bombs and their inclusion in military planning may be summarized as follows: the existence of these bombs, by reason of their great deterrent effect, has up until now apparently prevented the outbreak of another war; in case of an actual war, however, they must not be used as weapons if the power of the sword, employed to fight wars, is actually to serve the preservation of a historical existence for mankind. It will nevertheless be very difficult, if not impossible to derive from the Christian faith universally binding guides with respect to the construction of hydrogen bombs in the present world situation and their inclusion in military planning. The difficulty consists not least in the fact that the transformation of society into an



"ideological penitentiary" by an ideologically determined totalitarian dictatorship perhaps represents a more dangerous attack upon the historical existence of mankind than does the presence of hydrogen bombs in an army.

In view of this direct threat of the transformation of society into a collective of dead souls (where military action can also play a great role), and in view of the actual deterrent effect which hydrogen bombs have had until now, the ethical problems connected with the construction of hydrogen bombs and their inclusion in military planning are more complex than Christians generally are inclined to think. On the other hand, among Christians who are well aware of what God's will is regarding the function of the power of the sword there should be no difference of opinion about the fact that there can be no justification for the actual use of these bombs in a third world war. There must be no world war fought with nuclear weapons! There must be found a political organization of mankind which will eliminate such a war.....

It is questionable to what extent we can draw from our disavowal of the actual use of weapons of mass destruction conclusions which would be binding upon Christians in the decisions they have to make with regard to the urgent political questions of the day. Even the question of whether troops should be armed with "atomic weapons" cannot, on the basis of Christian conviction, be regarded as wrong on principle, as is evident from what we said above. A pacifism on principle is in no case consonant with the Christian faith. Even in the present situation the education of Christian congregations cannot include a call to the members to register as conscientious objectors. Yet those who in the present situation, on the basis of the insight which has been granted them as Christians, believe they must for reasons of conscience decline all military service do not thereby sunder themselves from the church. Indeed, the church shields them and offers prayers of intercession on their behalf.

The possibility of having within the one Christian church diverse, or differing, decisions of conscience even on questions as burning as these must be preserved.

For the whole area we have marked out the observation would apply: Christians should give what support they can to any measures which contribute to preserving the historical existence of mankind and should oppose any ventures which threaten that existence; it is, however, in no way promised them that mankind will actually continue to have a historical existence. The Bible is full of statements about how, before the return of Christ, the bases of man's existence will be pulled out from under him, but by bit, events within his own history being one of the causes. No one can say with certainty that today the history of the world has not entered this stage.

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